No. 27 PRICE 5 CENTS

# MY QUEEN

## A WONDERFUL SECRET
### OR MARION MARLOWE'S DISCOVERY
BY GRACE SHIRLEY

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY STREET & SMITH, 238 William Street, New York City.
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# Here Is Health

53 Leading St., Cleveland, O.,
Oct. 7, 1900.

Dr. T. A. SLOCUM,

Dear Sir:—I am pleased to inform you that your Remedies have completely cured me. I was troubled with weak lungs and chest, and also had catarrh. I *know* the Slocum System is the best in the world, and I will recommend your medicine to all who may be in need of Remedies of their character.

Yours truly,
HARRY L. LYON.

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McComb, Pike Co., Miss.,
Oct. 2, 1900.

Dr. T. A. SLOCUM,

Dear Sir:—I write to let you know that your Remedies have entirely cured my little girl of scrofula and I feel very thankful to you for all your kindness.

Yours respectfully,
MALISIA ADISON.

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Wesson, Copiah Co., Miss.,
Oct. 4, 1900.

DR. T. A. SLOCUM,

Dear Sir:—In reply to your kind letter I wish to say that since taking your Remedies I am sound as a dollar. I believe had it not been for your medicine I would now be in my grave. I feel very thankful to you for the cure that was performed in my case, and beg to remain,

Yours sincerely,
CHAS. VAN NORDEN.

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Woodland, St. Joseph Co.,
Oct. 9, 1900.

Dr. T. A. SLOCUM,

Dear Sir:—My little boy had catarrh in the head very badly. When he was five years old I saw your medicine advertised and tried it and he now is entirely cured. I I can highly recommend your medicine to anyone

Yours respectfully,
MRS. ASA TABER.

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Grove Park, Alachua Co., Fla.,
Oct. 19, 1900.

Dr. T. A. SLOCUM,

Dear Sir:—I received your letter, also the Remedies that you sent at my request and hope you will pardon my long delay in writing to you to recommend your good medicine. The pain in my breast has vanished and I am feeling a great deal stronger than before. I shall recommend your Remedies to all in my town who are suffering from consumption or any disorder of the throat, chest and lungs. Thanking you very kindly for what you have done for me, I remain,

Yours respectfully,
M. F. BOOKER

---

Orwell, Oswego Co., N. Y.,
Sept. 15, 1900.

Dr. T. A. SLOCUM,

Dear Sir:—The cough which has troubled me so long is now entirely gone, and I owe my recovery to your wonderful Pine Syrup. I am getting stronger every day, for which I feel very thankful to you, and I can recommend your Remedies to anyone in need of them.

Yours respectfully,
CHARLES DALLEY.

## For All Who Have Weak Lungs

## FREE

**These Four New Preparations** comprise a complete treatment and cure for nearly all the ills of life.

The **Emulsion of Cod Liver Oil** is needed by some, the **Tonic** by others, the **Expectorant** by others, the **Jelly** by others still, and **all four**, or any **three**, or **two**, or any **one**, may be used singly or in combination, according to the exigencies of the case. Full instructions with each set of four free remedies represented in this illustration.

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The treatment is **free.** You have only to write to obtain it.

By the **New** system devised by DR. T. A. SLOCUM the great specialist in pulmonary and kindred diseases the needs of the sick body are supplied by the FOUR distinct remedies constituting his Special Treatment, known as the Slocum System.

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MY QUEEN
A WEEKLY JOURNAL FOR YOUNG WOMEN

*Issued Weekly—By Subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by* STREET & SMITH, *238 William St., N. Y. Entered According to Act of Congress, in the year 1901 in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

No. 27. NEW YORK, March 30, 1901. Price Five Cents.

# A WONDERFUL SECRET;

OR,

## MARION MARLOWE'S DISCOVERY.

By GRACE SHIRLEY.

### CHAPTER I

IN THE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN.

"Marthy!"

"Yes, Joshuy."

"Hev ye got it through yer head yet, Marthy? Kin ye believe ther news is trew in thet air letter, thet our leetle gal hez actooally got er fortin?"

"It don't seem possible, an' thet's a fact! It's ther stranges' thing I ever heerd on, Joshuy!"

Marion Marlowe's old father and mother looked at each other as they spoke, and then Joshua Marlowe glanced with a critical eye around the farmhouse kitchen.

"I reck'n now, she won't never want ter come home ag'in, an' I don't blame her a bit, Marthy—ther old place aint over invitin'. It's heaps better'n it wuz when she left it, tho', cuz we've hed more money ter spend on it sence then, thanks tew her an' Dollie."

"Yes, indeed, our darters hev been good ter us, an' no mistake," said Mrs. Marlowe, with the tears springing to her eyes. "An' I can't jest say, Joshuy, thet we've allus desarved it. I aint forgot how bad yew treated Dollie, an' yet she fergive yew for it, an' so did Marion."

"Neither hev I forgot it, Marthy, so yew don't need tew remind me," retorted the old farmer, a little testily. "I ain't never got done repentin' my hardness tew Dollie, an' tew think fer months we've been a livin' on ther tew on 'em, 'ceptin' ther little we took fer boardin' Maggie."

Mrs. Marlowe wiped her eyes and a smile stole over her features.

"Thet makes me think of somethin', Joshuy," she said, brightly. "What dew yew think Maggie told me ther day she wuz married? Thet it wuz our Marion who rescued her from thet awful place where she wuz shet up an' taught to lie an' cheat an' steal; an' wuss, fer all I know, fer she wouldn't never tell me, an' it wuz Marion who sent her here

an' paid her board fer her, an' she never said a word, the dear, good gal. She wanted us ter think we wuz earnin' ther money."

Before she had finished, Joshua Marlowe was staring at her in amazement. He had never suspected what his wife was telling him.

"Waal, now, yew don't say!" was all he could answer, then his coat sleeve sought his eyes in a suspicious manner.

"Yes, she done it, our Marion," went on Mrs. Marlowe, proudly, as she glanced at a large lithograph of a beautiful young girl that was carefully tacked up above the fireplace.

"Our Marion hez done no end uv good, Joshuy. Maggie hez told me some things, an' Sallie Green hez told me others, an' ther's been more notices uv her than I could count in ther New York papers. She is a credit tew us, Joshuy, an' more'n a credit, an' now tew think of all thet money!"

This brought them back to the original subject, and Joshua Marlowe drew a letter from his pocket and adjusted his spectacles.

"I'll jest hev another look at it," he said, with an apologetic cough, for he had only a moment before put it in his pocket.

"My eyesight bothers me sech er heap now-er-days, Marthy, an' thar mought be a word thet I didn't ketch exactly."

He spread the dainty letter on his knee and re-read it carefully, while his wife folded her fat hands and listened eagerly.

"Dear, dear, just think!" she exclaimed, as he finished. "Our Marion hez traveled fer hundreds of miles an' seen things yew an' me never so much as heerd on, Joshuy, an' yet she talks jest ther same as ever. She aint no more stuck up this minute than her sister, Samanthy, who aint never been er rod from her own kitchen, yew mought say."

"I reck'n our Marion is er born lady," said the old farmer, slowly, "tho' ther Lord only knows how it happened, Marthy, fer neither yew nor me knows er doggoned thing erbout manners. But thar's one thing thet sticks in my crop erbout Marion," he added, more soberly; "I can't quite git over ther disgrace of her bein' an actress."

"Pshaw! 'Taint no disgrace ef Marion did it," spoke up his wife, sharply. "Now, don't yew go tew gittin' yewr back up erbout thet enny more, Joshuy, fer, I tell yew, this minute, thet I jest won't stand it! If Marion wants tew be an actress, ther ain't no reason why she shouldn't, an' ain't them picturs ernuff ter satisfy yewr conscience? Look at 'em, Joshuy Marlowe, an' git ashamed of yerself this minute."

She flounced out of her rocking-chair as she spoke and whipped an assortment of photographs out of the big family Bible, spreading them out upon the table before her husband.

The old farmer looked remorseful before the last picture was laid down, and it would have been hard for any one not to yield to such an argument.

The pictures were all photographs of a beautiful young girl with a face as sweet as an ideal Madonna.

Marion Marlowe, their daughter, had not forgotten her plain old parents, but one or two of each lot of pictures, which had been taken for advertising purposes during her theatrical career, had been promptly mailed to the old home in the country.

Not content with this, Marion had sent them papers and clippings, so that in their loneliness they might trace the whereabouts of their daughter and rejoice in the success that she was achieving.

"There, now!" cried Mrs. Marlowe, as the last picture was in place, "thars ther purtiest collection of pictures thet yew ever seed, Joshuy, an' you'd orter be proud thet Marion is yewr daughter without forever hintin' at her disgracin' yew by bein' an actress."

"I reck'n yew air right, Marthy," said the old man, sadly, "but yew an' me wuz brung up tew shun play actin', an' it's ther hardest thing in ther world tew go agin natur!"

He rose from the table as he spoke and glanced out of the window. The next minute, without any warning, the kitchen door flew open.

"Blest ef it aint Bill Bennett," exclaimed the farmer; then he happened to catch sight of a yellow envelope in the hand of his neighbor.

"Hello! It's er telegram ez sure ez I'm alive! Let's hev it, Bill, an' be quick erbout

it! It's from Marion, I'll bet, an' I'm obleeged ter ye fer bringin' it!"

He tore the envelope open with shaking hands, while his wife stood by twisting her apron nervously.

It seemed an age before the dispatch was read, and Bill Bennett stood waiting for the news with his mouth wide open.

Then something happened in the old kitchen that never happened there before, and it set every shining pan on the wide dresser to jingling.

The old farmer let out a whoop of genuine joy and did the first few steps of a Highland fling, while he waved the telegram in a transport of jubilation.

"Whoop! She's comin'! She's comin'!" he yelled, at the top of his lungs. "Git out an' tell everybody in Hickorytown, Bill! Our Marion's got er fortune an' she's comin' home tew spend it!"

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## CHAPTER II.

### MARION'S ARRIVAL.

Bill Bennett obeyed orders with such wonderful conscientiousness that long before the New York train drew into the Hickorytown station the next day nearly every person in the village was there to meet it.

And, as the train thundered toward the town, a beautiful young girl, clad in an exquisite spring gown, with a stylish hat perched upon her magnificent hair, peered eagerly from the windows of the drawing-room car and pointed out familiar objects to her two companions.

"Oh, I can hardly wait until we get there, I am so impatient!" she said, laughingly. "See, there's the church spire, Bert, and Farmer Day's big windmill, and, yes, I believe I can see the smoke from the poor farm! Oh, dear! That horrid farm! I hate it as much as ever! I never thought of it as anything but a blot upon the landscape!"

The laughing face had clouded instantly and the young lady who occupied the next chair leaned toward her sympathetically.

"And so this is really Hickorytown, Marion?" she asked, gayly. "If it is, I am ready to make my very best bow! To think that I am about to visit your birthplace!"

"And mine, too, Alma! Please don't forget me!" called out a boyish voice, as Bert Jackson drew his head in from another window.

"It doesn't seem possible," went on Alma Allyn, with a poor attempt to be jolly, "to think of one little place like this turning out two such celebrities! Why, my little Western town can only boast of me, or, at least, if there were any others, I never heard of them."

"Oh, you are as good as a dozen, Alma," laughed Bert; then he gave a whoop of delight as he caught a glimpse of the little station. "Gee whiz! There they are, the whole blooming lot of them! Do look at them, Marion! They must have heard you were coming! Well, just wait until they catch sight of yours truly; they'll all go into convulsions!"

Marion was straining her eyes now to scan the familiar figures and, as the engine gave its last warning "toot," her cheeks flushed with excitement.

Miss Allyn wiped away the steam upon the window pane and gazed out curiously. There seemed to be a perfect swam of country people thronging the little station.

"They've all turned out to welcome you home, dearie," she said, gayly, "and, oh, what a jolly lot they are, to be sure! Do look at that funny old man with the red bandana, Marion! Good gracious sakes alive, dearie, is that your father?"

Miss Allyn had just turned and caught sight of the look upon Marion's face, but the train had stopped now and there was no time for an answer.

"Hurrah for Hickorytown! I'm as glad to get back to it as I was to leave it! Now, here goes for a shock to that small mob of natives! Every one of 'em thinks I am dead! Just watch me fool 'em!"

Bert made a bound for the door as he spoke, and both girls followed him. They were as anxious as he was to see what would happen.

"You remember I wrote Matt Jenkins, the overseer at the poor farm——" began Marion, but she could get no farther. Her townspeople had caught sight of Bert and were fairly gasping with astonishment.

The next minute Marion herself stepped out upon the platform, and, with a flourish of his traveling cap, Bert turned and introduced her.

"Ahem! After an absence of several moons, ladies and gentlemen of Hickorytown, you see before you once more Miss Marion Marlowe. Not the Marion Marlowe who wore a calico sunbonnet and went barefooted and milked the cows and fed the chickens, but Marion Marlowe, the all-around champion of everything you have a mind to mention, the indoor, outdoor, down cellar and on the roof high cock-a-lorum, grand high muck-a-muck and general conqueror! The bravest heroine that the world ever produced! The most talented actress upon the American stage, Fifth avenue stage, Hickorytown stage or any old stage, and the sweetest, dearest, truest and prettiest girl that ever happened!"

Long before Bert was through his speech the honest farmers and their wives were grinning with pleasure. It had seemed wonderful to them to hear of all of Marion's achievements, so Bert's extravagant words did nothing but amuse them, but, as Marion sprang into her father's arms, they crowded around Bert, all talking at once, and nearly shook his hands off in their eager welcome.

"Yes, it's me, Alberto the Great!" Bert cried, in answer to a question. "I didn't get run over by a trolley-car a little bit. Marion put up that joke, and a rum one it was, too, just to keep Matt Jenkins from chasing me any longer. He was glad I was dead, you bet your boots, and so was I for a while, wasn't I, Marion?"

"Oh, Bert, do introduce me to some one! Don't you see Marion is busy and there's no one to help me!" called Alma Allyn, at that minute. She had been standing at a little distance, looking on at the spectacle.

"Of course I'll introduce you! Beg pardon for forgetting you, Alma," said Bert, as he stopped shaking hands and turned to her.

"Here, this chap is Bill Bennett, an old schoolmate of mine when I was—ahem—in the Academy de Poor House! And this good-looking chap is the Hickorytown postmaster, the best fellow in the world, only he doesn't know it."

He designated his friends with a nod of his head as he spoke, and Miss Allyn bowed and smiled politely, while the country people bowed back as good naturedly as possible.

"Oh, Alma, do forgive me for being so rude as not to introduce you to father first," called Marion, "but I was so glad to see him that I forgot everything else, and——"

A sudden exclamation from Bert made her stop and turn quickly.

"Look, Marion! There's Matt Jenkins! For goodness sake, what ails him? He is staring at me as if he thought I was a ghost! Quick, somebody! catch hold of the old brute! I believe he is going to punch me!"

Marion had taken one glance at the overseer of the poor farm, but that was enough. She, too, saw, that her friend was really in danger. Matt Jenkins was as pale as a ghost, and he was making straight toward Bert, pushing the people out of his way as he came, and flourishing a cane that looked suspiciously heavy.

"I'll learn you to play tricks on me, you imp!" he roared, savagely. "I'll learn you to put up jokes on old Matt Jenkins! Git out of my way till I git at the brat. I've licked him afore, but this time I'll kill him!"

"No, yew won't! Yew won't tech him!" bawled Deacon Marlowe, excitedly, while a dozen more of the bystanders tried to get between them.

"He'd better not try it!" said Bert, in a firm voice. "It's true he's licked me before, and you bet I haven't forgotten it! If he touches me now, I won't answer for consequences."

He was standing perfectly erect, looking straight at Jenkins, who was almost foaming at the mouth and was brandishing his cane wildly.

"They wrote me he was dead!" he roared, angrily, "but it wuz his doin's, I know, the little sarpent! Who is he that he dares tew sass Matt Jenkins! Only one of the town paupers fetched up on the poor farm!"

"You had better not touch him, Matt Jenkins!" cried Marion, warmly. "Bert was only a child when you beat him so terribly, but he's an athlete now, and he could pound you to jelly."

"Let him try it!" bawled the man, as he made a rush for Bert.

There was a horrible cutting sound as the heavy cane was swung over his head, the next moment Bert's fist took him squarely under the ear and the overseer of the poor farm measured his length upon the platform.

"He'll never fergive ye fer thet," said old Deacon Marlowe, as he looked admiringly at Bert. "Matt's got a nasty dispersition; he'll never fergive ye!"

"Well, I shall not ask him to," said Bert, coolly, as he offered his arm to Marion. "The nerve of him coming down here and spoiling all the fun of the occasion!"

Matt Jenkins crawled to his feet with the aid of the station master, but the villagers were some distance up the muddy road before he was able to follow them.

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## CHAPTER III.

### A HORRIBLE PREDICAMENT.

"May I speak a word to you, Miss Marlowe?"

The question was asked softly, just as the crowd was leaving the station with Marion leaning on her father's arm and Bert and Miss Allyn talking gayly to a group of the young man's old acquaintances.

Marion turned and saw a gentleman just behind her whom she recognized instantly as a passenger who had ridden from New York in the seat just across the aisle from her.

She had looked at him very sharply in the train, for there was something about his features that puzzled her—he reminded her of some one, but she could not quite place him.

Both Marion and her father stopped as the gentleman asked the question, and the young girl answered without the slightest hesitation:

"Certainly, sir, if you wish."

"I just wished to ask if all that I have heard is true? Is that young man really a ward of the county, and how much does that fellow that he knocked down know about him?"

Marion turned to her father, and Deacon Marlowe promptly answered for her.

"It's true, all right, that Bert was fetched up in ther poor-house, but where he come from nobody knows, onless, by gum! I never thought of that afore! Unless Matt Jenkins knows sumthin' or other!"

He looked at Marion questioningly, but the young girl had turned away to shake the hands of two buxom young women.

"I am here to see about some property that belongs to one of your neighbors," went on the stranger, glibly, "but, as I am leaving to-morrow, I'll give you my card—you'll do me a favor to let me know what you can about Mr. Jackson."

"Who be you?" asked the old farmer, without thinking to look at the card.

"You have my name and address there, sir, and, really, I hardly know why I have asked you this favor, but, somehow, I seem to have taken an interest in the youth. I hope it won't be any trouble, Deacon Marlowe. If you ever find out anything about him, let me know, will you?" was the answer.

"'Twont be no trouble, but I reck'n I'll never know no more'n I do now," said the old farmer, slowly; then, as Marion glanced back and smiled, the gentleman left them.

"Now, who ther mischief is he?" asked Deacon Marlowe, gazing after him. "'Taint often strangers come to Hickorytown, but 'taint surprisin' thet anythin' should happen ter day, Marion, when you're come home with er genooine fortin'."

"That's just what she's got!" called out Bert, who had heard the remark, "and I've got one, too, only mine is prospective, as they say, and—gee, but we won't do a thing to Hickorytown, you bet! Why, Marion is going to rebuild the school-house and put a new weather-vane on the church, and I—well, I'm going to remodel the poor farm and write the menu cards in future—that is, if we can manage to get rid of Jenkins!"

"You're rid of him for the present," laughed Bill Bennett, as he came up. "He's come to his senses and is cursing like all possessed. He swears he'll have you back on the poor farm before you are two weeks older."

"An' he kin do it, tew, Bert," chimed in another voice. "You wuz bound over 'til

you wuz twenty-one, an' thet's er year or two off, I reck'n. Yew've run yewer head into er noose by comin' back ter Hickorytown."

"You're way off your trolley, Dick Hinckley!" said Bert, laughingly. "My term of service was up at eighteen, so, you see, I'm as free as the wind! Matt Jenkins can't touch me!"

"You're wrong there, Bert," spoke up an elderly man, with a florid face, who was wiping his fat hands on a red bandana.

"You wuz tew stay 'til you wuz twenty-one, jest as Dick here says. Ef any one hez told you different, they wuz lyin' to ye!"

"And do you mean that he can put me back?" asked Bert, excitedly.

His face had paled a little at this information, but Marion's voice rang out with a stern determination.

"What nonsense! Bert has been adopted by a millionaire! Do you suppose his new father will allow him to go back to the poorhouse?"

There was a moment's silence before anyone spoke, and then Judge Walters, the man who had spoken before, slowly answered the question:

"Law is law, an' papers is papers, Marion Marlowe. Them papers of Bert's wuz made out in my office, and I'll testify thet they wuz all made out square an' fair. Bert can't be adopted by any one without Matt Jenkins' permission; he wuz bound out to Matt, an' thet settles ther whole business."

An ominous silence followed this judicial remark, and poor Bert's face grew paler and paler.

"What time is the next train for New York?" asked Alma Allyn, suddenly. "You must go straight back, Bert! You must not lose a minute!"

"Yes, do go back, Bert! There's a train at four from Haysville, isn't there, father?" asked Marion. "Get Bill or somebody to drive you over! I will not draw a long breath until you are safe from Matt Jenkins!"

For just a minute Bert looked frightened and was tempted to yield; then his face flushed a little and he faced them all bravely.

"No, I won't! I won't run a step! I'll stay right here and defy him! If Matt Jenkins is mean enough to spoil my future by trying to put me back in the poor farm, he can just go ahead and try, and you can watch him do it! I've come to Hickorytown on a visit, not to stay! I'll wire my new dad to-night and warn him of what is coming; then I expect the residents of this county to stand by me through this thing! They certainly wouldn't be so mean as to uphold that brute Jenkins!"

There was another ominous silence, and Marion glanced around uneasily. The group of people who were plodding along the road were all residents of the county, but it was their own votes that had put Matt Jenkins in his place, and kept him there for twenty years, in spite of his brutality.

"You don't mean to say that you would let him put me back there, Judge Walters!" cried Bert, suspiciously. "You are the biggest man in Hickorytown, and I want you to answer my question!"

The crowd had dwindled a little now, for they had just passed a fork in the roads, and for a minute everyone stood still and looked eagerly at Judge Walters.

"'Taint easy sayin' what you'd do, exactly," began the old judge, nervously. "Matt's a good man in his place, and I'm not ther one ter go agin' him. We put him inter office, an' its fer us ter stan' by him. 'Taint expected we should sympathize with every youngster thet runs away from ther farm jest because they happen ter hev ther good luck ter git adopted."

"Then you mean that you will stand by Jenkins if he attempts to get me back into his clutches?" asked Bert, growing furious.

"No, no! You can't mean anything so horrible as that, Judge Walters," broke in Marion. "You surely wouldn't do a thing that was so unjust and inhuman!"

Judge Walters drew out his bandana and wiped the dust from his stovepipe hat, and his broad chest began to swell with a thought of his importance.

"As a high official in ther courts of law, I must obey ther mandates of my callin'," he said, pomponsly. "So, if Matt Jenkins sees

fit ter nab yer, Bert, I'll be obleeged ter git out ther papers!"

"And that is exactly what he is going to do, Bert," called Bill Bennett, sharply. "There he comes this minute in old Dr. Greening's chaise, and I'll eat my shirt if ther constable ain't with him!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### A FRIEND IN NEED.

Bert did not move or flinch as the chaise came up to him, but the brave young fellow was doing some rapid thinking. It would not be very pleasant to go back to the poor farm, even for a day, for he knew exactly what kind of treatment he would receive from Jenkins.

The brutal overseer was an absolute monarch in his sway, and there were those under his rule who would obey his slightest order, so that any resistance upon Bert's part would be as good as useless. The ugly voice of the overseer made him almost furious, but he controlled himself after a quick glance at Marion.

"Thar he is, constable; thar's ther sassy upstart! Take him right along in the chaise and land him in the poor farm. Yew'r word is law there until I gits thar!"

He stepped out of the low vehicle as he spoke, and strode up to Bert, but this time he did not raise his cane nor threaten any violence.

"You'll regret this, Matt Jenkins," said Bert, in a furious voice. "You'll lose your position in the poor farm if you insist upon taking me back, for I won't leave a stone unturned until that victory is accomplished."

"As if I wuz afeared of your fine words, Bert Jackson!" sneered Jenkins. "What are yew, yew brat! Nothin' but er poor-house pauper! A boy with no name an' no nothin', a likely pup to be afeared of!"

He laughed coarsely as he spoke, but Bert's face turned as pale as ashes. The allusion to his name had awakened all the resentment in his nature. He was about to speak when Marion put her hand on his shoulder and turned her blazing eyes full on the face of Matt Jenkins.

"You may have the right to do this, and you may not, Matt Jenkins!" she said, in her ringing voice, "but let me tell you right here, if you do it you will regret it, for I will spend every penny of my fortune in getting you punished!"

The overseer's brutal jaw dropped a little as he listened and for a moment he looked decidedly uncomfortable.

"Law is law, Matt Jenkins!" said Judge Walters, solemnly. "Ef he'd orter go back it's your duty tew take him!"

"You old brute!" cried Alma Allyn, indignantly, as she confronted the judge. "So you are the biggest man in Hickorytown, are you? Well, then, the others must be mighty little!"

The red face of the august magistrate grew visibly redder, but Alma turned on her heel and ignored him completely.

"He run away an' it's right he should go back," spoke up another lanky farmer, by the name of Stebbins. "I ain't got nothin' agin' Bert Jackson in pertickilar, but he played truant, jest ther same as others has done, and, now thet Matt hez got him, thar ain't nothin' ter dew but hold him."

"He'd have a lovely time holding me, if I didn't choose to be held," said Bert, loftily, as he glanced around. "Why, I could double him up like a jack-knife with my little finger, but I am going to leave the whole thing to Marion Marlowe. What do you say, Marion? Shall I go back peaceably or kick up a rumpus?"

Marion thought a moment, and then her voice rang out decidedly:

"It is perfectly disgusting, Bert, but I think you had better go peaceably. As soon as I get back to the station I will wire your father, and then I shall start right in to get you out. There must be some one who knows the law a good deal better than Judge Walters!"

She glared at the old judge scornfully as she spoke, and, just at that minute two men crossed the muddy road and stood beside her. One was the station master and the other was the stranger who had given his card to her father.

"I think, perhaps, I can help you out of this hole, Mr. Jackson," said the stranger, very pleasantly. "I happen to be a lawyer,

and I have made just such cases as yours a specialty. Now, if you will take my advice, you will go right along with the constable, and leave the rest to your friends, Miss Marlowe and myself. We'll promise to set you free and square your account with Jenkins!"

"Indeed we will!" cried Marion, glancing at the stranger with shining eyes. "I have not the pleasure of this gentleman's acquaintance, but he says he is your friend and that is enough. A friend of Bert Jackson is a friend of Marion Marlowe's!"

Her handsome face flushed with pride as she spoke, and her old neighbors, as well as the stranger, looked at her admiringly.

"Go on, Bert!" she went on, more cheerfully. "Get into the chaise with Mr. Perkins. It is is very kind of Matt not to make you walk; really, he is showing you a great deal of consideration!"

She laughed scornfully as she spoke, and Bert moved toward the vehicle.

"Don't do anything rash when you get there, Jackson," whispered the stranger, warningly. "As it is, I can get you out on a writ of *heabeas corpus,* but if you cut up any didos, like smashing the old duffer's face, for instance, you'll make it mightly hard for me to get you out of his clutches."

"I'll keep as cool as I can," said Bert, putting one hand on the seat of the chaise and looking back over his shoulder; "but, see here, Mr. Lawyer, don't you want a retainer? If you are going to work for me, I want everything done ship-shape."

He put his hand in his pocket and drew out a roll of bills that made his old acquaintances almost turn green with envy.

"Not a cent yet, Jackson," said the gentleman, quickly. "I'm not afraid that you will not pay me, and, anyway, in this case, I'm not looking for money. There is another reason for my interest in you, but——"

He stopped suddenly and bit his lips, while Marion stared at him anxiously, for, once more, his face seemed to remind her of some one.

Old Judge Walters gave a peculiar cough just at that minute and his beady eyes were fixed greedily upon Bert's roll of greenbacks.

"Ahem! Perhaps now—that is, I might look up them papers agin', Bert. Ther mought be some clause in 'em thet would give you a loophole. I drew up ther papers, but I've almost forgot 'em—so, if yew want me ter undertake ter clear yew, I'm sure I'd do it reasonable."

Bert turned on his heel and answered scornfully:

"No, thank you, Judge Walters, I wish none of your assistance," he said, loftily. "My lawyer, here, will take a look at those papers, and, if there is any clause that you've forgotten, he'll remind you of it."

"Yes, and if there is any reason why you shouldn't go back to the poor farm, Matt Jenkins will suffer!" said Marion, hotly. "Oh, I am so sorry we ever came back to Hickorytown! I'd never look at the old place again if it wasn't for father and mother."

"And your mother is waiting for you, girlie," said Bert, springing into the chaise. "So, go and see her, Marion, and give her my regards, and, see here, Marion, don't you worry about me! I'm honestly glad that I am going back to the poor farm! It's the beginning of the end of that brute, Matt Jenkins!"

"Indeed it is," said Marion, throwing a kiss to him. "Good-by, Bert, for an hour or two. I'll hear from your father by that time! Come on, Alma. Come, father! Let us hurry home! I've had quite enough of this Hickorytown landscape!"

"And I will do myself the pleasure of calling upon you in two hours, Miss Marlowe," said the stranger. "Your father has my card, and he knows what brought me here. Just at present I have urgent business with your old neighbor, Judge Walters!"

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## CHAPTER V.

### A DISCOVERY.

Alma Allyn almost cried during the scene in the farmhouse kitchen when Martha Marlowe clasped Marion in her arms and poured out all the wealth of her motherly affection. After she had hugged Marion repeatedly, she kissed Alma also, and then

bustled about trying to make them both comfortable.

Marion ran back to the railroad station as soon as she could, and in less than an hour she received an answer to her message to Bert's foster father.

He would come as soon as he could, but the day was indefinite; meanwhile she was to hire the best lawyer to be had for money, and, above all things, get Bert out as quickly as possible.

"Which he did not need to tell me," she said, as soon as she read it. "Why, I should be tempted to burn down the poor farm if I could not get him out any other way, but I depend upon that gentleman to make it easier."

"Who is he, anyway, Marion?" asked Miss Allyn, who was making herself at home. "In the excitement it did not occur to me to ask his name, and I'm sure you did not think of it, either."

"He gave me his card," said Deacon Marlowe, as he began rummaging through his pockets, "an' I'll be doggoned ef I hain't lost it. Waal now, thet is jest like yewr old daddy, Marion, but it don't make no difference; when he comes we can ask him."

"Oh, Marion! Just look at that lithograph of you up over the mantel!" called Alma, at that minute.

"Doesn't it carry you back to that night in Cohoes! Why, it is the very dress you had on when Percy Preston threw you off of that train. Really, the minute I looked at it it gave me the shivers!"

"Oh, Alma, don't!" cried Marion, sharply, as she gave a quick glance at the wondering faces of her parents.

Miss Allyn's eyes flew open, but she took in the situation at a glance. The old farmer and his wife had never heard of that episode in their daughter's career, for all the newspapers they ever saw were the ones Marion sent them.

"It was a scene in a tragedy," she explained, glibly. "You see, the 'villain,' as we call the bad man of the company, was desperately in love with the heroine of the play, and he hated the soubrette with a bitter hatred. Well, in his horrible fury he got them mixed up and, instead of wreaking his vengeance on the one he hated he took it out on the other, who happened to be Marion; but, of course, our plays don't interest you much. Now, I haven't a doubt that you good people actually consider them wicked!"

She turned from one to the other with such honest eyes that, to save herself, Marion could not help laughing.

"I'll 'low I did think they wuz wicked oncet," said Mrs. Marlowe, mildly, "but, ef our Marion is a play actor, why, that makes it diff'rent. Marion wouldn't do nothin' thet wuzn't respectable."

"Indeed she wouldn't, mother," said Marion, going over and kissing her. "Your daughter was altogether too well brought up for that. She is as respectable to-day as she ever was in her life, and, my dear, dear mother, she is ever so much wiser."

"Yes, and richer," broke in Miss Allyn, with a mischievous smile. "You must just wait and see what is going to happen, Mrs. Marlowe. Why, I'll wager that, in less than a week, Marion will own this whole place, every corncob and mud puddle, to say nothing of the people!"

"I'll buy the poor farm first," said Marion, "that is if there's such a thing as bribing the county to sell it!"

"Oh, Marion! What a capital scheme! And, between you and me, I am sure they will sell it; that is, if the biggest man in Hickorytown has anything to say about it. Why, did you see the look in his eye when he saw Bert's money? Well, I did, and I tell you he'd sell his soul for a hundred dollars."

"I reck'n now yew'r right," said Deacon Marlowe, grinning. "An' I'm thinkin' as how it wouldn't be the first time, neither!"

"Good gracious! Do you mean that your townspeople are blessed with more than one soul apiece?" asked Miss Allyn, quickly. "If they are, I don't wonder Marion wouldn't stay here! The very idea of the thing is uncanny!"

Deacon Marlowe stared at her, but he understood her perfectly. In his old age he was developing quite a sense of humor.

"I reck'n it is onnatural, an' yet its gospel truth," he said, honestly. "Why, Miss Allyn, I've seen ther jedge dew a tarnal lot o' things in my day thet, ef I wuz ter hev done

'em, I'd er bin' tarred an' feathered. Why, don't you remember, Marthy, when Bert Jackson wuz born how ther jedge actoolly swore tew the lie thet Bert hadn't no father, when every one in Hickorytown knew a dern sight better!"

"Yes, an' he rid high-handed over everybody!" was the quick answer, "an' all in ther most mysterious manner. Bert's mother was boardin' tew Widder Grubb's when Bert wuz born, an' jest because Mrs. Jackson died afore she could explain matters, the jedge chucked Bert inter ther poor farm an' hushed up ther hull matter!"

"Well, the matter will not be hushed up much longer, I am thinking," said Alma Allyn, as she glanced out of the window, "for there comes the gentleman that is acting as Bert's lawyer, and there's something in his stride that looks decidedly victorious!"

Mrs. Marlowe rose and went quickly to the window, where she could see the stranger picking his way through the mud as he came toward the farmhouse.

"Oh, father, do look again for that card! It will seem so stupid, to have to ask him his name!" cried Marion.

"It's curus thet he takes sech an interes' in Bert," said Mrs. Marlowe, who had been told the story. "Mebbe he knows Bert iz rich, but, still, yew say he wouldn't take his money."

"No, he is not looking for money; I am sure of that," said Miss Allyn, decidedly; "but I'm not quite sure what his motive is. It may be for fame or only a love of his calling, or it may be, as he says, that he has taken an interest in Bert. Anyway, whatever it is, I hope he may be victorious."

A startled cry from Marion made her finish her sentence abruptly. Deacon Marlowe had succeeded in finding the card, and had handed it to his daughter.

"Oh, Alma! What in the world does it mean?" gasped the young girl, in astonishment. "Of all the strange things that ever happened, this is the strangest! The gentleman's name is Alberto Hobart!"

There was a moment's silence before any one spoke; then Miss Allyn found her voice sufficiently to answer:

"And Bert's foster father was Dunlap Hobart! Well, by all the little fishes, that is peculiar!"

There was a sharp rap upon the door before either of the girls had recovered from their astonishment. The next minute Deacon Marlowe rose and admitted the stranger by the side door to the little sitting-room.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LAWYER'S EMOTION.

Marion had just time to whisper a word of warning to her mother before Mr. Hobart entered.

"Don't say a word," she continued, anxiously. "It is for him to explain his interest in Bert. We must not be rude enough to question."

Her mother nodded, and then they all greeted Mr. Hobart, who was not nearly so "victorious" in his appearance after the door closed behind him.

"That old duffer, Judge Walters, is a sly one," he said, promptly. "Why, he kept me for half an hour before he unearthed those papers, and, even then, they were only copies. He asserts that his clerk has misplaced the originals."

"Thet's what I wuz tellin' yew jest now," broke in Deacon Marlowe, with a wink at Miss Allyn. "Now, ef I'd er misplaced er batch of important papers like them of Bert's I'd er been hooted out er Hickorytown, but then, I'm nothin' but er poor old farmer, while Jedge Walters is ther cock o' ther roost, or what we Yanks would call ther biggest toad in ther puddle!"

"Well, I don't know much about natural history, but there may be some kinds of toads that inhabit puddles and, if there are, he is one all right," snapped Miss Allyn, viciously. "Why, I'm willing to wager that he knows a lot about Bert! It's ten chances to one that he was paid for his silence! But, do go on, Mr. Hobart, and tell us all you have learned! I ought not to be so demonstrative, but my blood is fairly boiling!"

"And so is mine!" said Mr. Hobart, rising suddenly, and beginning to pace the floor. "I am too indignant for words, and yet I am

a lawyer! Honestly, I can hardly understand my deep interest in this matter!"

He glanced out of the window as he spoke, and Marion watched him curiously. It was plain that he was laboring under some great mental excitement.

"Yew kin force him ter show them air originals, can't ye?" asked Deacon Marlowe, soberly. "He must hev 'em som'ers—he wouldn't dast ter destroy 'em."

Lawyer Hobart turned quickly. There was a dark scowl upon his features.

"It is my opinion that the papers are not in his possession," he said, gravely. "If they are, he is keeping them somewhere besides in his office, for I made him pull out every drawer in the place, and the very eagerness with which he did it made me suspicious."

"Yet he drawed 'em up! I remember that distinctly," said the deacon, staring.

Lawyer Hobart took another stride around the room before he answered, and Miss Allyn and Marion glanced questioningly at each other.

The emotion which was so plainly depicted upon the gentleman's face was growing more and more perplexing, and yet neither of the young girls liked to ask him the question, or even mention the similarity in names which they had just discovered, for fear of bungling some serious matter.

"It is that fellow Jenkins who is bothering me," he said, finally. "Two or three times while I was in the judge's office that man came to the door and called him out. Now, what I want to know is, what is there between them? A secret, you can bet, and, furthermore, it relates to Bert Jackson!"

Marion's brow clouded in anxious thought, but she closed her lips with firm determination.

"We must ferret it out, Mr. Hobart," she said, decidedly. "See, here is a dispatch from Bert's father, telling me to leave no stone unturned to free Bert immediately."

She handed the telegram to the lawyer as she spoke, and then waited almost breathlessly. The telegram was signed by the name of Canfield. There was not a sign of recognition on the gentleman's face, as he read it, and the next instant, under the strain of her emotions, Marion broke out sharply:

"His father is a very wealthy man—he is a railroad president, Mr. Hobart, and, oh, it is so strange that I can't help mentioning it; his father was a poor boy once and his name was Hobart. He took the name of Canfield from a foster parent!"

She blurted the words out swiftly, and then, for a second, her heart almost stopped beating.

Mr. Hobart turned so pale that she thought he was fainting, and, as he leaned toward her, his eyes seemed to positively glare at her.

"Oh, Marion! You should not have said it!" cried Miss Allyn, springing to her feet. "Really, Mr. Hobart, it is only a coincidence! Dear me, what is in a name that you should look so startled!"

"I am dreadfully sorry! Pray forgive me!" murmured Marion, in agony, as the lawyer still stood like a statue, growing paler every minute. "I don't know why I said it, only it seemed so extraordinary. Your name is Alberto and so is Bert's, and your name is Hobart and so is Bert's foster father's! But do please sit down, Mr. Hobart, and let me get you a glass of water! I have been foolish in telling you, but it is too late to undo it!"

Marion moved a chair toward him as she spoke, and almost forced him into it; then darted into the kitchen to bring a glass of water.

"Dear me! But you dew look upset!" murmured Mrs. Marlowe, sympathetically, and then she, too, bustled out into the kitchen to hunt up a bottle of smelling salts.

"I don't know what ails me," said the lawyer, faintly, as he tried to smile in an indifferent manner. "I confess Miss Marlowe's news did upset me a little, but then, as you say, it is merely a coincidence, and the idea of a lawyer being 'upset,' as you call it. I give you my word I am disgusted with my actions."

He rose from his chair just as Marion entered with the water, and in a moment more the color was returning to his features. He had just opened his lips to speak again

when Mrs. Marlowe came back with a look of excitement upon her kindly face.

"They're a comin'! Jedge Walters an' Matt Jenkins! They're a'most tew ther gate! Now, what dew you suppose they are comin' here arter?"

Marion sprang to the window and took a sharp glance toward the gate, and, in that instant, the lawyer recovered himself completely.

"I know what they are coming here for," he said, in a sharp voice. "They are coming to 'dicker,' as they call it, with Miss Marlowe. They are going to offer to sell her Bert Jackson's release. It's just a barefaced attempt to get some of her money."

"Well, they can have my last penny, if it is necessary to release Bert," said Marion, with flashing eyes; "but I'll match my wits with theirs before they get it, Lawyer Hobart! They will not find me an easy dupe to their miserable efforts!"

"That is right, Miss Marlowe!" said the lawyer, admiringly; then he turned and glanced cautiously about the little sitting-room.

"See here," he said, after a minute's thought. "Those fellows don't know I am here, and it is just as well that they shouldn't. I'll just step out into the entry while you talk to them, Miss Marlowe. I can hear all they say, and I may be able to catch a pointer. I am sure that you and Miss Allyn will know exactly what to say. Lead them on and make them commit themselves, if possible."

"Oh, we'll 'string' them all right, if that is what you mean," said Alma, glibly. "We'll dangle Marion's money before their noses, and, if they nibble a little bit, we will land them for you."

There was a loud rap upon the kitchen door, exactly as she finished.

"I'll trust to you to do it right," said the lawyer, laughing. "You are both as smart as steel traps, my dear young ladies."

He darted into the entry as he spoke, and closed the door behind him, and, the next minute, Matt Jenkins and Judge Walters shuffled noisily across the kitchen.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE "DICKER."

"Now, Marion Marlowe, we've come tew hev a leetle talk with yew," began the old judge, as he leered first at Marion and then at Miss Allyn.

"It's er leetle onusual, I must admit, fer a man in my station tew be a callin' on his clients instid of them bein' a cringin' before him, but, bein' as how you ain't got no legal interest in this air case, an' as yew hev only a philanthropic interest so tew speak, we hev come, Matt an' me, tew make yew an offer, thet is, ef we understan' yew right thet yew air willin' tew buy Bert Jackson's release from ther county of Dexter, an' ther overseer of ther poor farm."

As he made this speech he dropped his bulky form into the largest chair in the room and then, pulling out his big red bandana, proceeded to wipe his forehead vigorously.

Marion's face was scintillating with scorn, but she controlled herself wonderfully, while Miss Allyn looked as composed as though such a proposition was an everyday occurrence.

Deacon Marlowe seated himself by the entry door with a grim expression upon his lanky features, while his wife slipped into a rocker and rolled the corner of her apron nervously, as she listened, almost in awe at her daughter's cleverness.

"Is it really a fact that Bert's re-incarceration is legal?" Marion began, sharply. "Are you sure you have a perfect right to do as you have done, Matt Jenkins?"

She flashed a glance at the brutal overseer that made his lean face flush for an instant, but he only nodded his head, and glanced at his companion.

"Matt don't know none of ther legal p'ints, Marion Marlowe, so he's a leavin' all thet tew me," said the judge, pompously. "As ther chief magistrate of Hickorytown, I answer all questions, an' I say yes tew both of them thet yew hev jest asked. Matt hez ther law on his side in all his transactions."

Marion glanced at Miss Allyn and a sly wink rewarded her. She knew by her friend's face that she was approving of her tactics.

"And do you refuse to give Bert up without money?" she asked, more quietly.

Matt shifted his gaze out of the window, and the old judge coughed uneasily.

"Ahem! Thet air is er fine p'int o' law, Marion Marlowe," he began, a little nervously. "Now, ef Bert Jackson wuz some boys, we'd say let him go fer nothin', but bein' as how he's as strong as an ox an' smart as er cart whip, his sarvices are wuth er lot tew ther county, an' it's them air sarvices thet count in this air dicker—'ther county hez got tew be paid fer what it's er losin'."

"Well, let us see how much that will be," began Marion, calmly. "You figure it, Alma. Father will get you a pencil."

Once more Matt Jenkins shifted his gaze from the window to the room, letting it travel around the wall paper until he could steal a furtive glance at Marion. It did not seem possible to him that this calm, handsome young lady could be little Marion Marlowe, the girl who used to drive the cows to her father's pasture.

The old judge was thinking the very same thing, as he wiggled uneasily on his chair, mopping his fat, red face with the old bandana handkerchief.

"All right! Fire ahead!" said Miss Allyn, pleasantly, as she flourished a piece of paper and a pencil with a tragic air.

"Well, in the first place, Bert is exactly nineteen and a half years old, which means that his term of service is just one year and a half longer. Now, father, how much salary does a hired man get? One from the poor farm, of course?" asked Marion, sharply.

Matt Jenkins gasped and sat straight up on his chair, while Judge Walters grew so purple in the face that he seemed in danger of apoplexy.

There was a comical grin on the old deacon's face as he answered, and his eyes sparkled with admiration as he looked at Marion.

"I reck'n now ther best on 'em gits erbout ten 'er month an' ther keep," he said, promptly, "an' thet ter ther best of my calkerlatin' is er hundred an' twenty er year, but thar's ther lost time ter be reck'ned when nobody wants help, which is mighty considerable in Hickorytown, I can tell ye."

"Oh, we will not count lost time at all!" said Marion, loftily. "We'll be both just and generous with the county, father—we'll call it one hundred and twenty a year, and the half a year added will make the total exactly one hundred and eighty dollars!"

She said the words loudly, so as to be sure that the lawyer could hear her, and, at the same time, Miss Allyn wrote the amount upon her paper in very large figures.

A moment of profound silence followed this rapid reckoning, while the judge and Matt Jenkins gazed uneasily at each other.

"Well, what is the matter, gentlemen?" asked Marion, finally. "I have figured up what Bert is worth to the county, and I am ready to pay it. Am I to understand that you accept my offer?"

Matt Jenkins' jaw dropped ominously, but the judge braced up with a heroic effort.

"'Taint no use tew try tew dicker with er gal, Marion Marlowe. I said thet afore we come here!" he said, weakly. "I wuz tellin' Matt jest as we come in ther gate, sez I, 'ther best way tew dew it is ter jest dew nothin'. Yew've got ther boy, an' thet's all thar ez erbout it. Let him work out his term same ez ther others.'"

"And Mr. Jenkins preferred to 'dicker,' I suppose," said Marion, scornfully. "He is so solicitous of the county that he would like it to be paid for Bert's services for fear. I suppose, that he won't be able to keep him a prisoner!"

"I'll keep him all right! No danger 'bout thet," snarled Jenkins, gloomily. "Ther constable's got him under lock an' key long afore this! Thar ain't no danger of his escapin' agin, Marion Marlowe!"

"Well, do you accept my terms?" asked Marion, sternly. "Are you willing to release Bert for a payment of one hundred and eighty dollars?"

Matt did not reply, although Marion was staring straight at him, and, just at that moment, the entry door opened.

"Yes, gentlemen, do you accept Miss Marlowe's offer?" asked Lawyer Hobart, stepping in. "We will pay you one hundred and eighty dollars for the release of Bert Jack-

son, the papers to be drawn up and signed immediately."

Matt Jenkins sprang to his feet with a growl of rage, while the apopletic old judge actually turned pale for a minute.

"I want your answer, your honor, the chief magistrate of Hickorytown," went on the lawyer, sarcastically, "and I can assure you that the cash is ready and waiting; you have only to say 'yes' and Miss Marlowe will hand you the money."

Another silence followed, and then Matt Jenkins made a bolt for the door, leaving the "biggest man in Hickorytown" to face the situation by himself. He had had enough of dickering with Marion Marlowe.

The judge made one more effort to uphold his dignity, but his voice trembled with fear all the time he was speaking.

"Them figgers iz tew small fer a feller of Bert Jackson's ability. It would be er differ-ent thing ef he wuz weak an' puny, but his sarvices air wuth five hundred tew ther county, ef they be wuth er penny, an' it's my opinion thet, ef I wuz ez rich ez Marion Marlowe, I wouldn't be so niggardly as ter balk at five hundred."

"In other words, you wish Miss Marlowe to bribe you, do you?" asked the lawyer, scornfully. "Well, see here, you bloated old ignoramus, just let me tell you what would happen if she were to offer you five hundred dollars and you were hog enough to take it. Why, I'd arrest you for extortion and make a public example of you. You can thank your stars that you are getting off so easy! You deserve to be kicked out of the place, you miserable old traitor, and, see here, I want you to produce those papers of Bert Jackson's; I'll give you exactly two hours! Do you understand, you old sinner!"

He was standing exactly in front of the old judge as he spoke and looking down at him in a way that forbade the culprit to tarry.

It was the first time in his judicial career that Judge Walters had ever been made to feel so small, but upon this occasion he was glad to escape with a whole skin. As he waddled out through the side door he did not even look back over his shoulder.

A ripple of Marion's sweet laughter rang in his ears as the door closed behind him, but it was quickly hushed as the young girl caught a glimpse of Mr. Hobart's face.

A moment later they were all listening to the story of his interest in Bert Jackson.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE STORY.

"It is exactly as I thought. There is some secret between them!" were the gentleman's first words, as he seated himself by Marion upon the old-fashioned sofa. "They are a precious pair of rascals in their own peculiar way, but I have something to tell you now, and we will get around to them later."

Deacon Marlowe seated himself on the corner of the pine table and began chewing a straw vigorously, while his wife became so interested in what was coming that she forgot to twist her apron and stood in the doorway with her hands upon her hips, looking from one to the other in utter bewilderment. Alma Allyn moved her chair a little nearer and leaned slightly forward, while Marion clasped her hands and looked fixedly at the speaker.

Anything that concerned Bert touched the very chords of her heart, for she loved the boy as dearly as though he had been her brother.

"It won't take long to tell my tale," began the lawyer, smiling, "and, when it is all told, it may be but a mere coincidence; yet I cannot believe I would be so affected, if it was. I feel certain there is some way of accounting for my interest in young Jackson."

He glanced at Marion as he spoke, and then hesitated a minute. He was undecided whether or not to ask her a question.

"No, I will not! I'll talk first and ask questions later," he went on, abruptly. "Although I am so eager to know what you know of Bert Jackson's foster-father that I can hardly restrain my impatience. Twenty-eight years ago I had a brother whose name was Dunlap. We were poor boys and had lost both our father and mother. We lived with an uncle upon a farm in Pennsylvania, and, when I was fifteen, I ran away and went into the navy. Dunlap was seventeen when I saw him last. When I came back to this

country after a ten years' service in foreign waters, I could not find so much as a trace of my brother. It seems he, too, ran away from the farm. My uncle was dead and no one knew anything of him. Eighteen years passed by, and I have traveled, traveled, traveled. Studied law in 'Frisco, practiced in Mexico, tried my hand at mining, ranching, and even the Klondike, and, yesterday, on that train between New York and Boston, when I confronted Bert Jackson I thought for a second that he was my brother. He is the living image of Dunlap as he was when I last saw him."

The words were spoken softly, but with intense emotion, and a little cry from Marion followed the announcement.

"And then I told you that Bert's foster-father was Dunlap Hobart and that he had received the name of Canfield through adoption," she said, sharply. "Oh, there must be some reason for it all, Mr. Hobart! As you said just now, this is more than a coincidence!"

"Captain Hobart Canfield, as he is most frequently called, must be your brother," said Miss Allyn, decidedly, "but the rest of the problem is enveloped in mystery."

"Unless Captain Canfield can solve it," answered Marion, quickly. "Oh, if he would only come at once, but he is so very busy! I am almost of a mind to send another telegram!"

"Wait until Bert is out," warned Miss Allyn. "That is the first thing to do, is it not, Mr. Hobart?"

The lawyer sprang to his feet and picked up his hat.

"It is, indeed, and I am wasting time," he said, quickly. "I must see the County Clerk and some of the Selectmen or whoever looks after affairs in this village. My brother was only a boy when I saw him last, but there is something in this story that has made my blood run cold. Mark my words, I shall sift this matter to the bottom!"

"And I will do all I can to help," said Marion, rising. "My money is at Bert's disposal, although I know he does not need it, and I'll set my wits to work and see what I can find out. As Bert said to-day, this must be the beginning of the end of Matt Jenkins."

"I will report as soon as I have learned anything," was the lawyer's answer; then, for just a moment, he glanced admiringly at Marion.

"With such a friend as you, Miss Marlowe, Bert is sure to come out all right, and, with such an ally, the poorest lawyer should succeed. I depend upon your aid in winning this victory."

His glance was so tender as he spoke that Marion flushed with modesty, but his words rang with earnestness and tender emotion.

A thrill of pleasure flashed through every fibre of the young girl's being. She was glad to be admired by a man like Lawyer Hobart.

The deacon discreetly turned his back and was looking out of the window, while Mrs. Marlowe had disappeared from the doorway and was bustling about the kitchen.

"I'm going to help your mother get tea," said Miss Allyn, promptly, "for I'm as hungry as a bear, in spite of all this worry."

She darted out into the kitchen also, and Marion looked shyly at the lawyer.

"You will stay and have some tea, will you not, Mr. Hobart? There is no hotel or public house in Hickorytown. I must insist upon your remaining. Tell him he must stay, father!"

She turned her glorious eyes toward the old deacon, who answered, cordially:

"Waal, now, I reck'n he aint got ther heart ter refuse yew, Marion, 'thout my askin' him, but he's welcome as ther sun on er medder of hay. We'll figger it an honor ef he'll stay ter supper."

Lawyer Hobart glanced at his watch and hesitated just a minute and, in that minute, the deacon vanished.

"Do stay," murmured Marion, with a tender smile. "This affair is distressing you, I can see it, Mr. Hobart. Do please consider us your friends and make our home your home while you stay to help us."

There was a pleading note in her voice that the lawyer could not resist and, acting upon a momentary impulse, he placed one hand lightly upon her shoulder.

"Will you be my friend, Marion Mar-

lowe?" he asked, softly. "You are the truest woman I have ever known. Will you honor me with your friendship, now and always?"

His manner startled her, it was so intense and eager, but her eyes were raised to his at once in a glance of fearless honesty.

"I will be your friend, certainly," she began, when suddenly a sound broke upon her ears which checked the words and made her cry out quickly:

"The church bell! Oh, father, there is a fire somewhere in the village! Quick, Mr. Hobart! Come outside! It may be the home of one of our neighbors!"

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FIRE.

"It is a fire! Oh, Alma, now you will see a novel sight! Just think of a building burning down and no way to put out the blaze except by buckets!"

Marion cried out the words as they all hurried into the yard.

"There it is, and it's ther poor farm, ez sure ez I'm livin'!" cried Mrs. Marlowe, as she spied a great cloud of smoke rolling up in the distance.

"Joshuy, run over jest ez fast ez yew kin! It's some of them pesky boys on ther farm that's done it!"

She held one corner of her apron up to shade her eyes as she spoke, for it was nearly six o'clock and the sun was low in the horizon.

Marion pushed her gently aside and darted out. Her face was as pale as death, but her eyes were blazing.

"Oh, Alma! Just think! Bert is over there!" she cried, sharply. "Come quick, father and Mr. Hobart! Perhaps if we run we may get there in time to help a little!"

Without waiting to get her hat, she started across the yard and, in a second, her father, the lawyer and Alma were following her.

"Can you jump fences, Alma?" she called, over her shoulder, as she vaulted a low stone wall which separated the door yard from the garden.

Miss Allyn gathered up her skirts and made a brave attempt, but landed on the other side with such a dull, sickening thud that, for a moment, she thought that every bone in her body was broken.

"I can do anything that I have to do, Marion," she gasped, bravely; "but, I give you my word, this is all a mistake! Fancy my doing that act out here in this God-forsaken country! Why, if I had done that on the stage, Temple would have doubled my salary!"

She was stumbling across the garden as she spoke, trying to keep pace with Marion and the lawyer, while old Deacon Marlowe followed, calling to them repeatedly to "steer clear of ther reddishes."

"Steer clear of nothing!" muttered Alma, defiantly. "We are on the warpath, Marion and I. Let the radishes steer clear of us, if you please, Deacon Marlowe!"

Marion bounded over a rickety fence and dashed down into a meadow with her friends at her heels, both panting like steam engines.

"Oh, I do hope we will get there in time!" she cried, again. "If we don't, it will be awful! Oh, Bert! Bert! How dreadful!"

"You are right, it is," groaned Miss Allyn, as she fell over a stump, but recovered herself promptly. "I wouldn't have believed anything could be so bad. But we'll get there on time if we keep up this gait. There's nothing in the line of rapid transit that can beat it!"

"She does go pretty fast, but she's used to it," said Deacon Marlowe, as he suddenly caught up with the others. "Marion was allus a great girl at jumpin' fences but, hello, here's the rest of Hickorytown, I reck'n. I wuz jest a thinkin' it wuz time we'd orter meet somebody!"

A dozen men were coming across the pasture from all directions, and every one was hurrying toward the smoke and blaze, which was only about an eighth of a mile ahead of them.

"Ther farm's er goner fer good, this time, I reck'n, deacon," shouted Bill Bennett, at the top of his voice. "There can't nothin' save them buildin's now! I never see sech smoke! It's as black as thunder!"

"Lucky ther boys is all out!" shouted another voice. "They wuz all scattered around when ther bell begun ringin'; but thar they are ahead of us an' runnin' like mad! I

reck'n now, ef I wuz one on 'em, I wouldn't try so dern hard tew save ther old mansion!"

Marion turned her head, but did not slacken her speed.

"You'd hurry, too, if you had Dan Robbins at your heels!" she called out, sharply. "Can't you see him swinging his whip at the boys? Oh, he's a worthy assistant to that brute, Matt Jenkins!"

Alma Allyn paused for just a second and glanced ahead.

A group of ten or a dozen boys were scampering toward the poor farm, but, as Marion had said, a keeper was behind them, and at that minute she could hear his rough voice fairly bellowing his orders.

"What a picture for an artist, and what a story for a paper!" she cried to Mr. Hobart. "Well, this is an experience I shall never forget! Talk about your cross-country runs! This beats everything and anything I ever encountered!"

She stumbled once more, but the lawyer caught her by the arm and, after scaling one more fence, they were in the same lot with the poor farm buildings, which were now fairly enveloped in flames, from which great clouds of smoke were rolling.

"I reck'n now Matt hed jest erbout time tew git here," began the deacon, as he slowed up a little. "Now, who in thunder could her sot it on fire when ther boys wuz all out an' ther whole ranch empty?"

He asked the question so loudly that the whole group heard it and, without a moment's hesitation, Bill Bennett answered:

"Who could er done it 'ceptin' Bert Jackson? Warn't he ther only boy on ther place arter ther constable left him!"

Marion wheeled around and stood stock still for a moment, while Miss Allyn caught her breath and looked from one to the other.

"Of course he done it! I could see right in his eye he meant ter do sumthin'," said Farmer Stebbins, knowingly. Then they all dashed off toward the group of boys who were helping their keeper to bring out some buckets.

"It's a derned lie! Come on, Marion!" called Deacon Marlowe, suddenly. "It's nat'ral thet they should lay it onter Bert, but sayin' is nothin'; they've gotter prove it!"

"You bet they have!" cried Alma, fiercely, "and to think the poor boy may be burned up at this very minute!"

"Oh, Alma!" gasped Marion, and then, once more, she darted ahead.

The main part of the building was not blazing yet, and she made as straight for the door as the rough ground would let her.

"There may be some one in there—I'm going in!" she cried, without turning her head. "Come on, father, come with me! You are too old to work with those boys! We'd better go into Matt's office and try to find the number of Bert's cot! It would be folly to go hunting all through the building, for we might never find it!"

"She's right! Marion is allus right!" was the old man's answer, as he followed the brave girl into the main building.

Lawyer Hobart, had already joined the group of keepers who were surrounding the old well, but Alma Allyn paused a moment upon the doorstep and glanced about her.

The poor farm was only a collection of small frame buildings, the one in front of her being the largest and best of the number.

Already two or three of the smaller ones were only heaps of ruins, while the others were in various stages of destruction, and were only waiting for a gust of wind to set them roaring. The smoke circled about her and the hiss of steam came to her ears as the boys tossed on their buckets of water methodically, while above all the confusion of excited voices she could still hear the brutal tones of the assistant overseer bawling out his orders.

Where was Matt Jenkins?

She could not see him in the group. And where was Bert?

A cry from Marion answered her.

The young girl had dashed into the main room which Matt Jenkins had used as his office, and the first thing her eyes rested upon was a lot of loose papers scattered upon a desk that stood by a tightly closed window.

"Oh, father! See! They are all about Bert!" she cried, as she glanced at them; then both she and the old deacon stopped suddenly and stared at something.

Miss Allyn was behind them in the space of a second. Then the three stood in consternation and stared for another minute.

The body of a man was lying in one corner of the room, and as they gazed at it in horror, Marion suddenly found her voice:

"Oh, father! Alma! It is he, Matt Jenkins! He has been murdered in his own house! Who could have done it?"

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## CHAPTER X.

### SUSPICION.

A shout from the men outside brought Deacon Marlowe to his senses. The building they were in had taken fire and they must make their escape instantly.

"Come, quick, Marion! The place is afire!" he yelled, but his daughter did not heed him. She was picking up the scattered papers and stuffing them into her pocket.

"Go on, father! I'm coming!" she answered, calmly. "These papers are about Bert and I am going to save them! There's the safe in the corner, do please shut it, Alma! Who knows how many birthrights are in there—stolen by that man, Matt Jenkins!"

"He's gone ter his reward," said the deacon, solemnly, as another shout from outside warned him to hurry.

Miss Allyn slammed the heavy door of the old-fashioned safe and fastened it securely; then the three made their way through a cloud of smoke that was fast filling the little entry.

As Deacon Marlowe reached the stepstone he tried to speak, but the smoke had choked him so he could not utter a syllable.

Miss Allyn took him by the arm and led him away, but Marion still stood in the doorway of the poor farm, as if reluctant to leave it.

The other buildings were in ruins now, and the roof of the structure she was in was burning vigorously.

Boys and men had turned their attention toward the last remaining remnant of the old farm, but they were powerless to save it, for there was no more water.

As Marion stood outlined against a cloud of smoke, a sudden shaft of light from the setting sun fell squarely upon her features.

For an instant her danger was forgotten by them all, for there was something in her appearance that was almost weird and unearthly.

Slowly she raised one arm above her beautiful head, and her voice rang out across the meadows like the blast of a bugle:

"Has any one seen Bert Jackson since the fire started? Or does any one know that he was in the poor farm?"

There was no reply, and the men and boys only stared at each other.

Without waiting a second the young girl went on:

"Has any one seen Constable Perkins since the fire broke out, or has any one seen the overseer, Matt Jenkins?"

Still there was no reply except the crackling of the flames and the sudden ominuos snapping of burning timbers.

"Come, Marion, do!" cried Alma Allyn, sharply. "It is not safe for you to stay there a minute longer; besides, the men must go in at once, if they want to bring out that body!"

Marion moved down the steps—she had completely forgotten Matt Jenkins. Her senses seemed dazed through her anxiety about Bert's welfare.

There was a groan of horror as Miss Allyn spoke and, in an instant Bill Bennett and Dan Robbins rushed into the building.

When they emerged the whole group on the outside had moved to a safer distance, for the wind had shifted and was driving the flames toward them.

"It's him, as true as gospel, an' he's bin murdered," said Bennett, hoarsely, as they laid the body of the dead overseer under the lee of the well curb.

"His throat's bin jabbed by a jack-knife, as sure's I'm alive. Now, who in thunderation could her done it?"

A sharp laugh from one of the poor farm boys drew every one's attention. The poor ill-treated child had caught a glimpse of the dead face and had promptly gone into a fit of hysterics.

"They ain't none on 'em sorry, I reck'n," muttered Deacon Marlowe. "Matt wuz er brute tew most on 'em an', of course, they hate him, but ther warnt one on 'em thet would er dared tew cut up thet air caper!"

He pointed to the dead man's throat as he spoke, and every one shivered; then Dan Robbins, the assistant overseer, moved a little nearer to the body.

"Thar's them thet would dare ef they got ther chance," he said, grimly. "Thar's Black Jim, ther nigger, he hez walloped so often; he'd hev give him ther knife at euny minute; an' ther's lame Charley, he aint one ter fergit old scores! Matt hez horse-whipped him within' an inch er his life, but Charley wuz out in ther field, so he couldn't er done it."

"Think again, Dan Robbins," spoke up a familiar voice, and old Judge Walters came up, puffing from the haste with which he had

come and with one hand swathed in his red bandana.

"Think agin an' see ef thar warnt some one here thet hated Matt an' hed ample oppurtoonity fer doin' jest this thing! It'll pay ye tew think again, an' be quick erbout it, Dan'l Robbins!"

As he spoke with his usually pompous air, every eye was turned upon him and, as Marion glanced at the red face, she saw the beady eyes fixed upon her features.

Dan Robbins shook his head. He was too much excited to do much thinking. His home and all he possessed in the world had just been reduced to ashes.

"I wuz jest comin' over tew ther farm when I seen ther smoke, an' I reck'n I've rung thet air bell 'til my hands is blistered," went on the judge, with his glance still on Marion. "Now, it's ez plain ez ther nose on yewr faces thet this air aint no accident! It's murder, thet's what it ez! Can't yew think who done it, boys? Aint it within' ther scope of yewr numbskulls ter guess ther culprit? Perhaps, now, it mought be thet one on yewr number wuz in ther poor farm, left behind fer er day's work fer some reason er other, an' jest a layin' fer Matt ter wreak his vengeance."

He glanced inquiringly at the boys and then looked back at Marion, who was beginning to imagine about what was coming.

"Thar warnt no one left behind," stuttered one of the largest boys. "Ef Matt wuz murdered, ther devil must hev done it."

"Ther devil wuz his friend!" corrected Deacon Marlowe, sternly. "Now, why in thunder dew yew say ther devil done it?"

"Cause ther warnt no one else," answered the strange boy, grinning. "Ther warnt no one on ther poor farm when ther fire started except ther Old Nick an' his friend, Matt Jenkins."

"Waal, now, thar's supustishun fer yew," muttered Farmer Stebbins, with a glance at Judge Walters. "Them boys hez got thei idee thet Matt Jenkins wuz infalluble, an' thet's er high reckermendation fer any overseer, I tell yew! He wuz er corker, Matt wuz, an' now he's dead! Waal, thet brings us back ter ther question, who could er done it?"

There was another flourish of the bandana and a loud cough from the judge and, once more, he fixed his cruel glance upon the white face of Marion.

"Ther poor farm is erbout gone, men an' boys of Hickorytown," he began, tragically. "Ther fire is er dyin' an' ther sun is er settin', but, afore 'em both, I hold up my right hand an' hereby take my solemn oath on this perticilar business, thet I reckon I know who done up Matt Jenkins an' done him ter his death, if yew'll excuse plain language."

An ominous silence fell upon the crowd as they all craned their necks to catch what was coming.

Marion drew her breath hard and set her teeth, then her glance met that of the speaker's as unfalteringly as an eagle's.

Evidently, the judge thought Bert was in the poor farm when the fire was discovered.

"Perhaps, now, yew don't know who wuz er sojournin' under thet thar roof this afternoon when ther fire broke out, boys," he went on, still dramatically. "Yew wuz in ther fields, so how should yew know! Well, thar wuz some one thar, which fact is very evident, an' thet some one wuz no stranger tew ther poor farm, boys. He hed tasted all of its joys an' comforts fer many years afore this experience, an', tew put it mildly, he hed it in fer Matt Jenkins. Now, who should murder Matt but ther one thet hed ther chance when ther poor farm wuz erlone an' ther wuz none tew succor? Matt wuz knifed an' then ther buildin' wuz set on fire! Them two crimes in ther annals of civilization hez allus gone tergether. Matt wuz knifed, I sez, and ther poor farm wuz razed, an' ther fellow thet done it, in my joodicial opinyun, is er boy of nineteen years an' er half by ther name of Bert Jackson!"

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## CHAPTER XI.

### NEWS.

The last words of the accusation were almost bellowed, and then Judge Walters drew himself up to enjoy the consternation that followed.

There was just an instant of silence in which every one looked at each other, and then Marion took a step forward and confronted Bert's accuser.

"Shame on you, Judge Walters!" she said, in a scathing voice. "How dare you accuse Bert of such a crime? There is not one grain of truth in what you have said, and, if I were a man, I would force you to retract that vile statement."

"Or prove it," spoke up Lawyer Hobart, stepping to Marion's side. "Which will it be, you old blackguard, will you take it back or prove it?"

His face was dark with anger and his voice shook with determination, and, as the old judge looked at him, he began to cough, uneasily.

"The idea of the old brute accusing Bert of murder when, perhaps, the poor boy is burned to a cinder," cried Miss Allyn, furiously.

Marion gasped with horror, and then her nerve gave out. The next moment she was sobbing piteously upon her father's shoulder.

"Thar wuz no one else ter dew it," muttered the judge, in a husky voice. "Didn't I see Matt jest ahead of me when I wuz crossin' ther paster, an' didn't ther smoke belch forth afore I got ter ther well curb? Ef any one done it, it wuz some one on ther premises, an, tew ther best of my knowledge, ther only one here wuz young Jackson."

"Well, you will do well not to spread that tale until you can prove it," said the lawyer, warningly; then he turned to Marion with a look of compassion.

"Please go home, Miss Marlowe. You can do nothing here," he said, gently. "I'll stay and help look over the ruins, and I'll stop that man's mouth, if I have to throttle him."

"Yes, come home, Marion! 'Tain't no use er stayin' here," urged Deacon Marlowe, softly. "Ther poor farm iz gone an' ther smoke iz awful; besides, yewr mother 'll be a worryin' herself tew death by this time."

"I've sent fer ther coroner," spoke up Dan Robbins, crustily. "Jim Vedder hez gone fer him. I kin trust Jim anywhere. We'll find out purty quick now if Matt wuz really murdered."

"It mought be suicide," suggested Farmer Stebbins, thoughtfully. "'Tho' I can't jest say thet wuz Jenkins' natur. He'd ruther live forever than ter die. Thar won't be no boys tew lambast in ther place he's er gone tew."

"Hush! Don't say nothin' erbout his soul! It's sacrilege!" ordered the judge, solemnly. "Matt wuz er good man in his way, ef he wuz pecooliar, an' he's come tew er sad end, poor feller, poor feller!"

He raised the hand that was wrapped in the bandana and made a feint at wiping his eyes, but no one believed that he was really crying.

"I guess you've lost your side partner, all right. I don't wonder you feel badly," said Miss Allyn, scornfully. "You were a fine pair, I'm thinking! You'd better let this be a warning to you, sir, for who knows how soon you'll come to the same end! People can't go on bullying and abusing others forever!"

The judge gave her a vicious glance, and then waddled away in a rage. This young lady's sharp tongue was not over pleasant to one of his dignity.

"It's funny ther bell didn't bring ther constable," spoke up Bill Bennett, as he threw down a bucket and turned his back at last upon the smoldering ruins. "I'd er thought he'd have bin ther fust man tew git here, a-knowin', as he did, thet he wuz ther last one ter leave ther premises."

He gazed reflectively over the lots toward the village road as he spoke, and Miss Allyn left Marion's side and went over to Lawyer Hobart.

"What is to be done next, Mr. Hobart?" she asked, anxiously. "Marion refuses to go home until she knows something of Bert. Do you think it is possible that he could have been burned in any of those buildings?"

She glanced over the smoking piles that the boys were already inspecting, and the lawyer lowered his voice as he answered.

"Not if he set fire to them, Miss Allyn. Jackson is too clever for that. If he started that blaze it was to burn himself out, and he's far too smart to be caught in a trap of his own setting. My opinion is that he did not start the fire; still, whether he did or not, I am sure he has escaped. The only thing I can't understand is that nobody saw him."

"Perhaps he knew just which way to go! You know Bert has tried this before," was the answer, "only the last time he ran away he had Marion to help him."

"It is strange that the constable isn't here," began the lawyer, when Marion interrupted him. She had dried her eyes and was fast recovering her firmness.

"Look, Mr. Hobart! There is Dr. Greening, the coroner, coming up the hill! Now, how does it happen that the old fellow is walking?"

In an instant every eye was turned toward the village road, which wound in and out around the hills, like a strip of narrow ribbon.

Old Dr. Greening, the Hickorytown coroner for the last forty years, was slowly climbing the last hill, accompanied by Jim Vedder, the boy who had been sent for him.

"Now, that air is strange," said Deacon Marlowe, as he suddenly comprehended Marion's words. "In the hull forty years of his term ez coroner, I never seed ther doctor hoof it ter an inquest. His hoss must er cast er shoe or gone lame or sumthin'."

"Didn't Mr. Perkins have the chaise when he brought Bert over?" asked Marion, suddenly. "Oh, father, that may explain a lot! Do send some one for the constable! Oh, why hasn't some one thought of that before!"

She turned appealingly as she spoke and her eyes encountered those of the lawyer and, in an instant, his hand rested almost caressingly upon her shoulder.

"I did that the first thing, Miss Marlowe," he said, gently. "I sent Toby, the Hickorytown postmaster, but he has not come back,

which leads me to believe that he has not found him."

"Here he comes! Here comes the coroner!" shouted one of the boys. "Now we'll know for sure how Matt died! Ten to one Matt'll come tew life in time to lick us afore supper!"

Old Dr. Greening was purple with overexertion when he reached the group, and his voice trembled as he spoke from sheer indignation.

"Thet's ther fust an' ther last time I'll ever lend my chaise tew Perkins!" he began, savagely. "He borrowed it fer an hour an' 'taint back yet, but whar's Matt Jenkins's remains. Let me git er look at 'em!"

The group, which included half of Hickorytown now, described a wider circle about the moss-grown well curb, and Dr. Greening prepared to "view" the body.

"Here's Toby, at last," said Lawyer Hobart in Marion's ear. "Here's the postmaster, Miss Marlowe. Now, perhaps, we will hear something definite."

He took the young girl's arm and led her away, as much to take her from the scene about the well curb as for anything else.

"Oh, we must learn something! I shall go mad if we don't! Just think, Mr. Hobart, if Bert were really in those ruins! Oh, I should die, I am sure, and so would his sweetheart!"

Mr. Hobart glanced at her, inquiringly, but there was no time to explain, for, at that moment, they were accosted by the excited postmaster.

"It's ther strangest thing that ever happened in Hickorytown!" he called out, shrilly. "Ther constable never come tew ther farm, at all! He couldn't, fer he wuz seen at half-past four a drivin' like mad from ther Hayville station along ther Turnersville turnpike, and thar ain't no one seen hide nor hair of him sence, nor the hoss an' chaise, neither!"

Marion's heart gave a great bound as she heard the words.

Bert's cleverness had outwitted the Hickorytown officials. The next second her emotions overcame her, and she burst out laughing.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE PAPERS.

That evening after the excitement of the fire was beginning to pass away, a little group of anxious people assembled in Deacon Marlowe's sitting-room. They were all satisfied now that Bert was alive, and Marion was feeling sure that she would very soon hear from him.

"He probably bribed the constable to take him to the railroad station, instead of the poor farm," she said, with a merry light in her eyes, "and, as soon as he gets to New York, he'll send a telegram."

"Which ought to come about ten o'clock," said Alma, glancing at the clock. "It is eight thirty now; only an hour and a half longer."

"And in that hour and a half we will look over those papers," said the lawyer, softly; "for, I confess, I am so anxious to see them that I can hardly wait. I must know the reason for this unaccountable likeness between Bert Jackson and my brother, Dunlap."

"You think there is no doubt about Bert's foster-father being your brother?" asked Miss Allyn, eagerly.

The lawyer looked thoughtful, but he replied at once:

"It seems hardly probable that there is another Dunlap Hobart, and, if he was adopted, and took the name of Canfield, that would readily explain why I never heard of him. Of course, I never expected to look for my brother among the rich and mighty of the land, and you say he is a millionaire and a railroad president."

"Yes, and a fine, noble gentleman as well!" said Marion, quickly. "Oh, Mr. Hobart, he is the loveliest father in the world, and he simply adores Bert. You ought to see them together."

The frown darkened a little upon the lawyer's brow.

"I can't understand it! There is some mystery behind it," he said, slowly. "Of course, you have not noticed the similarity in their looks, Miss Marlowe."

He glanced at her eagerly, but Marion replied with a merry laugh:

"I did not have the pleasure of knowing your brother at the age of seventeen, Mr. Hobart, but I can assure you that Bert and his foster-father do not look alike now, for Captain Hobart Canfield is very gray and wears a full beard and mustache. He is very handsome, but he does not look like Bert, although, of course, it is his age that may make the difference."

As Marion was talking she drew from her pocket the papers that she had taken from Matt Jenkins' desk, and spread them upon the table, while the mother brought a lamp and carefully shaded it.

"I don't know that I had any right to take them," she said, in a low voice, "but I am glad I did, for they would have been burned

if I hadn't, and, anyway, I could not help it when I saw Bert's name on them."

"Yew hed every right in ther world," said her father, quickly. "Yew knew they wuz safer with yew than they wuz with Jedge Walters, an' he's ther one thet 'ud hev got 'em ef you'd put 'em in thet air safe."

"I just wish I had all of the papers that are in that safe," cried Marion, hotly. "I haven't a doubt that it contains a lot of secrets, that would reflect discredit both upon Matt Jenkins and the county."

"Things iz run purty lax," said Deacon Marlowe, shaking his head. "Ther jedge an' Matt hev hed things purty much their own way, but 'twouldn't dew fer me tew interfere in their doin's. I'd be given tew understan' I was meddlin', purty quick, I kin tell yew."

"Well, I shall not be afraid to meddle, I can tell you!" cried Marion, sharply. "If I find that they have wronged Bert, I'll do more than meddle! I'll stay right here in Hickorytown, if it is necessary, until I punish them for it."

"Poor Miss Ellis! Just think how she would feel if she were here," said Miss Allyn, suddenly. "Miss Ellis is Bert's sweetheart, and she is a dear little girl! She would have gone raving crazy over that scene at the poor farm, when we were not sure whether Bert was dead or living!"

"But air yew sure now?" spoke up Mrs. Marlowe, nervously. "Yew ain't heerd nothin' definite 'cept thet ther constable wuz missin'."

"An' he's missin' yet, Mrs. Marler," called a loud voice, suddenly.

Bill Bennett had opened the kitchen door and come in just in time to answer.

Marion sprang from the table where she had been seated beside the lawyer, and looked at the newcomer with her eyes full of questions.

"We've found ther hoss an' chaise clear out on ther turnpike," went on Bill, excitedly. "Ther constable hed headed it this way an' then left it tew its fate. I reck'n he knew old Joe would make straight fer his stable, but gee, ain't ther doctor mad! He'd jaw like er good un ef he could see ther constable!"

"Do you mean that Mr. Perkins has gone?" asked Marion, excitedly.

"Lit out fer fair, an' no mistake! What else would make him quit ther chaise, ef he hadn't?" was the answer.

"Then I am sure Bert bribed him," said Marion, almost laughing. "Poor boy, he dreaded to go back to the poor farm, even for a few hours, and I can't say that I blame him, can you, Mr. Hobart?"

"Indeed I cannot," was the lawyer's somewhat absent-minded answer. He was still sitting at the table with his eyes almost glued to the batch of papers.

"Come out in ther kitchen an' git some cider, Bill," said Deacon Marlowe, suddenly. "Yew kin tell me what yew've heerd an' I kin tell it tew Marion. Ther lawyer, Mr. Hobart, wants ter inspect them air papers."

They went out into the kitchen, and Mrs. Marlowe followed, while Marion went back and seated herself at the table near Miss Allyn, who occupied the low rush rocker.

A moment later a low cry of horror from Mr. Hobart startled them, and, at the same time, he pushed a paper across the table to Marion.

"Quick! Read it, Miss Marlowe!" he cried, as he sprang to his feet and began pacing the floor, excitedly. "There is a letter written by Bert's mother on her dying bed! Those two unprincipled rascals did not dare to destroy it!"

Marion read the paper as rapidly as she could, but her hands trembled so violently that she could hardly hold it.

It was only a brief scrawl, that was almost illegible, but the tears poured over Marion's cheeks before she had half perused it.

When she finally laid it down, Alma Allyn was gazing at her with eager eyes, but the lawyer was still pacing the room, his brow black with fury.

"Oh, Alma! Oh, Mr. Hobart! Isn't it awful!" Marion gasped in agony. "Bert is Dunlap Hobart's legitimate son, but his poor mother died without being able to tell her story, and, for some reason or other, Judge Walters and Matt Jenkins concealed it!"

"And that reason was money!" cried Lawyer Hobart, suddenly. "My brother's wife had money and jewels in her possession when she came here and boarded under the name of Mrs. Jackson. Because she died without speaking they improved their opportunity! Oh, I can see the whole thing! It is as plain as day! The only mystery is—why did she leave my brother, and why did she hide under another name when she must have known that her child would be the sufferer?"

There was another reason why the judge and Matt Jenkins had not destroyed the letter. They hoped that they might find Bert's real father and offer to find his son for him for money.

There was a loud rap upon the door just at that moment, and the next second Marion was feverishly opening a telegram.

"It's from Bert! He is safe and with his father! Oh, I can bear anything, now that this suspense is over!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

### EXPLANATIONS.

Exactly twenty-four hours later the scene had shifted and Marion Marlowe sat with her friends, Alma Allyn and Dr. Reginald Brookes, in a private parlor of one of the handsomest hotels on Broadway. They were waiting for Bert Jackson and his father to join them, and Lawyer Hobart was in an adjoining room, ready to come at a pre-arranged signal from Marion.

After reading all of the papers he had done some rapid work, and the result was that, before they left Hickorytown to come to New York, Judge Walters had been arrested upon two separate charges and locked in the county jail to await further developments.

Marion opened her purse and secured board for every boy who had been made homeless by the fire at the poor farm, and already her bid was in to rebuild the structure.

Now, as they sat talking together, she turned to Dr. Brookes and added a few more details of the thrilling story.

"From all I could learn from our old neighbors, I find that a lady came to Hickorytown just nineteen years and a half ago and boarded for a month with the widow Grubbs, as we called her. She was very pretty and refined, and appeared to be wealthy, but she shunned acquaintances, so very few of the townspeople saw her. The night she died she sent for Judge Walters, and, after she was dead, he had her buried and her baby was put in the poor farm under the name of Bert Jackson. Nobody dreamed of questioning the judge's authority, and, as no one ever came to Hickorytown to find out anything about the lady, the whole thing died out as a sort of nine days' wonder. The judge advertised the death once in the Haysville paper, but, of course, no one ever reads that except the people that knew all about the matter, so that was as good as no notice at all, in my opinion."

Dr. Brookes sighed as she finished, and shook his head dubiously. He was as fond of Bert as though they were brothers, and it had been an effort for him to restrain his emotion since Marion had come to his office an hour before and had told him the story.

There was a step in the hall outside, and Captain Hobart Canfield entered and greeted them very cordially. Bert had told him of his Hickorytown experience, so he turned to Marion immediately.

"I cannot thank you enough for your friendship to Bert," he began, promptly. "I suppose it was foolish for him to go back to that place, but he was so sure that he was free that he did not dream of danger. Well, thank fortune, he was able to do as well as he did! There is one time when I actually rejoice in bribery and corruption."

The gentleman was smiling merrily—he had no idea of the truth, and of course he had not heard what followed Bert's escape from Hickorytown.

Marion tried to speak, but for a moment it was impossible, so her friend, Dr. Brookes, came promptly to the rescue.

"The poor-house was set on fire long before she knew that Bert had escaped, so you will understand that Marion had a few anxious hours, Captain Canfield," he said, quietly. "And not only was the poor farm burned down, but the overseer, Matt Jenkins, was murdered, and, of course, the whole thing was laid upon Bert, until his telegram proved that he could not have done it."

The gentleman looked at Marion and his kind face grew grave, but the young girl hastened to reassure him.

"Oh, Bert's reputation was fully cleared before I went to bed last night," she said, quickly; "and besides, we are almost sure that the judge himself set fire to the buildings, and he has already been arrested on suspicion of having done it. But that is not all we have come for, Captain Canfield. We have something to tell you that I am afraid will almost kill you—we have discovered something definite about Bert's father and mother!"

"They are not living, are they?" gasped the gentleman, growing paler.

Marion rose with an impulsive movement and put her hand on his shoulder.

"His mother is dead, but his father is living," she said, softly. "I have proofs of everything, or, rather, Bert's lawyer has them; he told you of the gentleman who offered to help him, didn't he?"

The captain nodded his head and Marion went on:

"Well, it seems that this gentleman had an interest in Bert; in fact, he said Bert looked exactly as his own brother looked when he was Bert's age, and, because of that, he took an interest in the case, and then—oh, Captain Canfield, what do you think developed? Bert's father turns out to be this gentleman's brother. We found the proofs among the papers that I saved from Matt Jenkins' desk at the poor farm. The lawyer has them all, and you can imagine how he feels over it."

"Poor fellow! I am sorry for him," was the captain's answer. "If I could only have explained my interest in Bert upon some

such grounds—but I never could—it has always been a mystery."

Marion's hand rested a little more heavily upon the gentleman's arm as he spoke, and she suddenly looked up into his face with almost radiant features.

"I can explain your interest, if you will let me, Captain Hobart," she whispered eagerly. "Bert reminded you of some one, but you did not know who. It was just so with the lawyer. Bert reminded him of some one, and he suddenly discovered that the some one was his brother. Now, perhaps, if you think hard you will be able to place Bert. Oh, Mr. Canfield, I must say more! I must ask you a question! Did you, yourself, look like Bert when you were seventeen years old, and when you lived on a farm with your brother, Alberto Hobart?"

The deed was done, and Marion held her breath, while Miss Allyn and the doctor leaned forward to see what would happen.

Captain Canfield turned very pale and then a flush spread over his face. In an instant it seemed as if he had experienced a revelation.

"Alberto Hobart, my brother! Have you seen him?" he asked, slowly.

Marion put her handkerchief to her lips and a sharp cough followed.

The next instant Dunlap Hobart and his brother were confronting each other.

Marion and Miss Allyn wept silently while the two gentlemen embraced; then, in as few words as possible, the lawyer told the story of Bert's birth and incarceration in the poor farm, after which he waited for his brother to recover from his emotion.

Captain Canfield was a strong man, but he bowed his head for awhile. When he raised it, he made his explanation as brief as possible.

"I married several years after I was adopted," he said, softly, "and, during the second year of our married life, my foster-father died, and I was obliged to go abroad to look after his interests. My wife understood, and was willing that I should go, but, after my departure, cruel stories were told her of my falseness, and when I returned she had vanished from our home, and, although I have sought the wide world over, I have found no trace of her. When I first saw Bert, a clerk in a grocery store, I was wonderfully attracted to him, and, as soon as he told me he was an orphan, I hastened to adopt him."

The gentleman grew calmer as he spoke, and the others gathered around him. When the reaction came they would be forced to leave him alone, but, while they was time, Marion determined to offer all the consolation possible.

"Oh, I am so glad he is your son!" she whispered, clasping her hands together; "Bert loves you with all his heart, and he will be delighted! Oh, our day of sorrow has had a happy ending!"

"It will have a sorrowful ending for some one," muttered the lawyer, quickly. "Matt Jenkins is beyond our reach, but that rascally judge must suffer, and every official in that county must answer for his actions! I shall go back to Hickorytown at once, Dunlap, and it is for you to say what shall be done in the matter."

Captain Hobart lifted his head to reply just as the door flew open. With a whoop of joy, Bert came flying into the apartment, and the next moment he was kissing and hugging both Miss Allyn and Marion.

Miss Ellis, his sweetheart, was just behind him, and, for a moment, every one was too bewildered to plan the next movement.

"We will call carriages and go straight to my home," said Captain Canfield, whose eyes had hardly wandered from Bert's face. "This is not the place to talk over our secrets. Come, my friends, let us go where we can consult together."

He put his hand upon Bert's shoulder as he spoke, and the young man looked up at him proudly.

"Yes, we'll go home, father, and talk things over," he said, with a happy smile. "I've been so busy bragging about the *modus operandi* of my escape from the hayseed constable, yesterday, that I haven't had time to do any thinking yet! Say, you ought to have seen how he gobbled my wad! He said he hadn't seen so much money in his whole term of service, and I fancy he made tracks pretty lively, after I left him at the depot! Now, the next thing on the programme is to queer that old judge, and then kick the planks out from under Matt Jenkins; but—Jimminy Christmas! What is the matter with you all? Have I run up against a snag anywhere in my elopement? Out with it, Marion! You're as glum as an oyster."

Once more the captain's hand rested heavily upon his shoulder, and the genial voice said, in tones of unusual eagerness:

"Never mind all that, now. Come home, my boy. There is a great deal to be told about the revelations of yesterday."

Bert closed his lips after a glance at his companions, and, with his father's arm in his, he led the way to the carriages.

When the story was told him, he was entirely overcome, but, in the love of his father he found ample compensation.

As the days went by, everything adjusted itself quietly; but, before he could be tried, Judge Walters died of apoplexy. The constable never returned to Hickorytown, and who killed Matt Jenkins was never quite decided, but the evidence showed that the judge had followed him into the office of the poor farm, and, in a quarrel over the contents of the safe, the judge must have lost his temper and stabbed his old companion in guilt in the neck with his jack-knife.

Marion rebuilt the poor farm at her own expense, and actually forced the county to hire humane people to run it.

Deacon Marlowe was given an account in the Haysville bank, and it was not long before the old farm gave forth signs of Marion's fortune.

As for Marion herself, she was as happy as a lark. She had restored Bert's birthright and relieved Captain Canfield's mind of its burden of anxiety; besides, she had made a friend to be proud of in Alberto Hobart.

THE END.

Next week's MY QUEEN (No. 28) will contain "An Interrupted Wedding; or, Marion Marlowe as Maid of Honor," which will tell of the wedding of Marion's old chum, Alma Allyn.

# PATTERN COLUMN.

By special arrangements with the manufacturers we are enabled to supply the readers of MY QUEEN with the patterns of all garments described or illustrated in this column at TEN CENTS each. Address, "Pattern Column," MY QUEEN, 238 William Street, New York City.

☞ *In ordering patterns be sure to give size and number.*

## FASHION NOTES.

Yokes are not stylish in shirt-waists.

Accordeon plaited skirts are in style again. This fashion is especially becoming to girls.

Flowing sleeves with abundant ruffles of lace and chiffon are a feature of some of the latest gowns.

Very stunning are the blouses of guipure lace worn with a white silk bolero trimmed with narrow black satin bands.

Black cloth coat and shirt gowns, lined with a color which is repeated in the blouse and petticoat, are promised as one of the spring modes.

The new Swiss muslins exhibit a great variety in polka dots in color and rather large in sizes, in the white grounds or in black on various tinted grounds.

The "lace yolk" fashion is going to be talked about again next summer, but it bids fair to prove as popular as ever. There is some talk about making it the style to wear only colored instead of white meshes of lace and muslin over the arms and shoulders, so that the effect at a distance will not be so much like a low-neck dress as it is when the meshes are white or cream-colored.

### No. 2454—LADY'S JACKET.

This simple but stylish jacket is shown developed in dark brown camel's hair serge, lined with black satin. The pattern cuts in sizes 32 to 42 inches bust measure. Size 36 requires 2 3-8 yards of 42-inch, or 1 5-8 yards of 52-inch material.

Made according to the instructions, this garment is neat, stylish and attractive, and becoming to most figures.

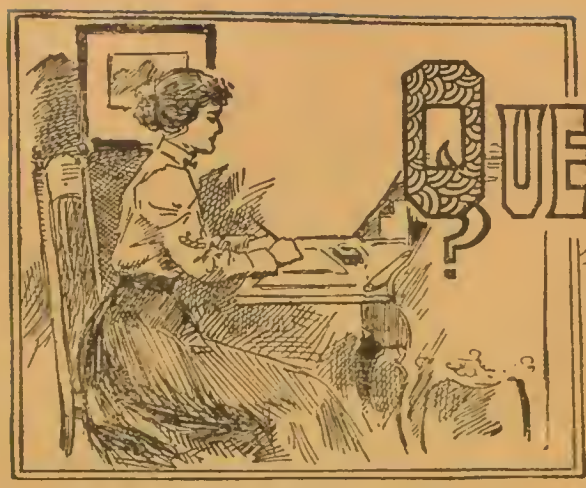
### No. 2438—LADY'S WAIST.

Albatross, like all other veilings, is very fashionable for afternoon toilette. In this illustration the garment is of a reddish brown shade, with embossed brown velvet and ecru silk. This model is adapted to Venetian crepe de chine, Henrietta or taffeta. The pattern is cut in sizes 32 to 40 inches bust measure. Size 36 requires one and three-eighth yards of 42-inch material, with three-fourth yard of tucking, five-eighth yard of embossed velvet or allover lace, three-eighth yard of bias velvet and three-eighth yard of silk for sleeve puff.

### No. 2444—WAIST FOR A MISS.

Oriental embroidery or allover lace and tucked silk make a dainty combination for this stylish bolero waist. Silk, velvet, crepe de chine and soft wool novelties would develop the design prettily.

The pattern is cut in sizes 12 to 16 years. Size 14 years requires 3 1-4 yards of 21-inch, 2 1-4 yards of 32-inch, or 1 5-8 yards of 42-inch material. As shown, 1 3-4 yards of 21-inch plain or tucked material, with 1 3-4 yards of allover and 4 1-4 yards of trimming.



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BY

## GRACE SHIRLEY

NOTE.—This department is a special feature of this publication, and it will be appreciated, we feel sure, by all our readers. It is conducted by Miss Shirley, whose remarkable ability to answer all questions, no matter how delicate the import, is well known. Readers of "MY QUEEN" need not hesitate to write her on any subject. Miss Shirley will have their interests at heart and will never refuse her assistance or sympathy. As all letters are answered only through the columns of "MY QUEEN," it is unnecessary to enclose stamps.

So many letters are being received by Miss Shirley requiring answers in this department that we shall have to ask our correspondents to limit their letters to 200 words, in order that all may be answered. STREET & SMITH.

I have a lot of admirers, but do not like any of them much except one fellow, and I do not like him well enough to marry him. He is a nice fellow all right, but he is too generous with his money. When he meets a friend he wants to treat him, and no matter how many are in the crowd he takes them all along just the same. I don't like it when he can't take care of his money any better. I know he loves me very much, but I am careful whom I choose for I see too many unhappy marriages. Please advise me what to do.

Lowell, Mass. Brenda K.

We know of few habits that are more pernicious than the habit of "treating." It is utterly senseless, to begin with, and is productive of more drunkenness than any one other thing. If your friend loves you so very much, why do you not use your influence to induce him to be less foolish? In this way you would be doing him a good turn, even if you do not like him well enough to marry him.

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I am a young girl eighteen years old. My sister, who is sixteen, and I live with an aunt. I have been keeping company with a young man to whom my aunt objects on account of his being poor. Last week he sent me a note asking me to go to a concert with him. My aunt said if I went she would whip me. I did go just the same, but when I reached home, and just as my friend was saying good-night at the gate, my aunt rushed from the house crying "You are in for a good old-fashioned spanking," and seizing me by the arm she dragged me into the house and shut and locked the door in the face of my astonished escort. In spite of my struggles, she then whipped me. Now, I appeal to you, Miss Shirley, was that right? Would you advise my sister and me to go away and try to earn our own living or must we stay to be turned up and spanked like babies every time my aunt thinks we deserve it.

Waltham, Mass. PUZZLED ONE.

Your letter has enlisted our astonished sympathy! We have always approved of spanking as the most appropriate of all forms of bodily punishment, as it does not injure any organs and is good for the circulation, but we have always supposed that children could be punished quite as effectually by other means. If your aunt's judgment is better than yours, and, if she is supporting you, we would suggest that you do nothing to arouse her ire, but, if your judgment is better than hers, and you are capable of earning your own livings, my advice would be to wait until she commits another offense and then you and your sister turn in and spank the old lady. I have seen quite as many parents and relatives who deserved this form of punishment as I have children, but, unfortunately, there was no one to administer the spanking. From a serious, progressive point of view, spanking is both absurd and unnecessary, and no woman of dignity will ever resort to it, and no young lady with self-respect will ever submit to it.

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I was very pleased to receive your good advice in last week's issue of "My Queen." I have read all of the series. At first, my mother did not want me to read such books, but after I induced her to read one she now awaits them as impatiently as I do. She read the advice you gave me, and said it was just the kind of advice she would have given. There is a young man I like very much. We have a dance every Saturday evening which all the young people attend, and for the past four weeks he has escorted me home. A short time ago he was very good friends with a girl. She has not been to these dances for six weeks, but last Saturday she and a girl friend of hers came. He had been the same to me as ever, but as soon as he saw them he went to them and stayed with them all the evening. I promised him one of my pictures some time ago, and as we were leaving the dance he stopped me and asked for it. I protested against giving him one, although I had some with me; but he said, "You know you promised me one." So I gave him one. He then went to his friends and showed it to them. I suppose he went home with Miss R. I felt pretty badly, but, of course, I tried not to show it. I know if he comes near me he will get a very cool reception. Don't you think that would be right? HOPE L.

Providence, R. I.

The fact that the young man saw fit to divide his attentions at the dance need not deter you from treating him kindly. It is very poor taste for a young man to attach himself to one young lady and stick to her an entire evening at a pub-

he function, and we think your friend had a perfect right to do as he did, inasmuch as he is not your accepted lover. We advise you to cultivate the acquaintance of other young men, so you will not be dependent upon this particular chap's attentions. We thank you for your words of praise regarding "My Queen."

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A young man (Hebrew) has been calling on me quite frequently of late. Father, who is a Protestant, has a great dislike for Hebrews, and I am afraid that he will insult my friend, although he has not objected as yet to his calling. Do you think I am doing wrong in allowing him to call? EDYTHE.
Philadelphia, Pa.

We would advise you to have a plain talk with your father beforehand if you anticipate anything so unpleasant. If the young man is a gentleman, we can see no reason for your father's insulting him and think, perhaps, you are distressing yourself needlessly.

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I am a girl of sixteen and I am in love with a young man of thirty. He loves me dearly and has asked me to be his wife, and I accepted him. He asked my parents, and they objected. I do not know what to do. I am heartbroken, so please advise me. VIOLET W.
Paterson, N. J.

You are entirely too young to think of marriage, and we are glad your parents were wise enough to veto the idea. No girl of sixteen is competent to select a husband, nor is she fit to assume the duties of matrimony.

We advise you to secure a copy of "Love, Courtship and Marriage," published by Messrs. Street & Smith, and read it carefully, especially that part which refers to a woman's fitness for marriage. "Woman's Secrets; or, How to be Beautiful," issued by the same publishers, would also give you some valuable knowledge as to the condition of mental and physical development a girl should attain before it is sensible or safe for her to marry.

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I am a girl of seventeen and I attended a dancing class in our town. I met a very nice young man there, and he began taking me home and made dates with me as my father is so strict that I was not allowed to bring him to the house. I kept going with him for three months, but then went away for a month and when I came back took a walk with him one afternoon. Then I did not see him for three weeks, when he walked past me one day on the street. Last night he was in church (where he never goes) with two girls. He is very jealous. Please tell me if I ought to speak to him. STELLA T. L.
Elizabethtown, Pa.

We can see no reason why you should not speak to an old friend. Possibly some mischief-maker has been at work, and the best way to find out is to have a candid conversation with him. You can simply say that you judge by his manner that something has happened, and as you still feel perfectly friendly towards him, you are anxious for an explanation. His manner and words will tell you how to proceed. If he no longer desires your friendship, think no more about him.

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I am not very good-looking, but seem to have a great many friends, and one of them is very dear to me. He has seemed to treat me very cool of late. He is fine-looking and seemed to care for me at one time, but because I took a small package from him he was very angry and ceased to think the same of me. He promised twice to come and see me, but did not, and I was greatly disappointed. Will you be so kind as to help me to win him back, as I love him dearly.
Brooklyn, N. Y. JENNIE C.

Your letter does not tell enough for us to advise you as fully as we would like. Did you have a right to the package and did you take it by force or how? A man who promises to do a thing and does not do it is not worthy of very much love or consideration, and we advise you to turn your attention in some other direction. You say you have many friends, so you ought to be able to find solace in their company.

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I am a young man of twenty and am engaged to a young lady who dearly loves me, and has proven herself a lady, but I am not sure that I really love her. I have doubts and think queer things about her when I am at my work. When I am with her I would forsake all on earth for her, and I am true to her. Can you advise me whether this is love or a fancy? And how can I get rid of these doubts? HARRY L. C.
Braddock, Pa.

You seem to be bordering on that condition known as morbidness. A man who thinks "queer things" about a woman who has "proven herself a lady" is not the kind of man to make a good husband. Love and confidence go hand in hand. When you really love, you will find it impossible to "doubt" your loved one. Try to get over your failing as soon as possible. You can only do so by good, vigorous censure of yourself and a course of mental training.

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I am a cattleman and have worked with cattle all my life. I am thirty years old, and have been married three times. I have thought the reason I had so much trouble was that I was away from my home the most of the time, and when I married the last time I sold my ranch and cattle and went into the meat market business. Of course, I could not stay at the house all the time, but after I had been married about five months I came home one night, and my wife told me that I could not stay in the same house with her, that she would go back to her mother, and, of course, I told her to go. So now I have three wives living and am yet single, and I love them all. I have got plenty of money to support a wife—in fact, I furnish the first two with money and could marry either of them again if I wanted to, but they have caused me so much trouble that I could not give either of them the chance to fool me again. Please tell me if you think it would be advisable for me to marry. WILLIAM G.
A——, Texas.

No, we do not think it wise for you to marry again, and are more than surprised that you

should desire to do so. We do not believe that three women have "made trouble" for you simply because you were away from home attending to your business. It is very apparent that there is some other reason.

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I have a gentleman friend who causes me great anxiety. I have known him for about two years. His home is in a neighboring town, but a while ago he came and started in business here. All summer we were together, and my parents approved of my going with him. He has sold out and gone back home now. He has promised twice when he has seen me that he would write, but has not. I know I love him. Do you think it would be wrong for me to write him first? He is a little bashful, I think. ANXIOUS.
W——, Illinois.

If your friendship warrants a polite, friendly letter, there will be no harm in your writing him first. You can say, as an excuse for writing, that you were anxious to know how he was getting on, but do not display any particular sentiment. If he does not answer your letter, do not write again, as that will be conclusive proof that he does not wish to continue the acquaintance.

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I have been going with a young man about a year and like him very much—in fact, I preferred his company to that of any one else. Now he has left me. What shall I do! My heart will break if he don't come back to me. Please tell me how to win his love again. I can hardly wait for your answer. MARGARET.
S——, Ohio.

My dear Margaret, I am sorry, indeed, that you have been unfortunate in love, but do not allow it to "break your heart" or make any serious disturbance in any other directions. Remember, "there are just as good fish in the sea as ever were caught," and it is neither wise nor modest to be crying after a fickle lover. We do not advise you to make any effort to regain this young man's love, as affection without constancy is not worth having.

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I have been keeping company with a nice young man and love him very much and he loves me. He asked me to become his wife and I said "yes," but when he asked my parents' consent, they said "no." He has a steady position and is able to support a wife in comfort. They say the reason they object is because he is an American and I am an Italian. Can you help me in my trouble? CARINA C.
Paterson, N. J.

We have never been able to discover anything objectionable in an American gentleman, and think your parents must have some other reason than the one you have mentioned for their disapprobation. Possibly, you are a Catholic and your lover a Protestant. We do not approve of daughters marrying without the consent of their parents, unless the parents are foolishly prejudiced in their judgments

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I am a young man of very serious disposition, and write asking you to help me settle an important matter. I am engaged to a young lady whom I have never seen, only her photograph, but since I have told her I was an acrobat and traveled for my living, she says she will not marry me until I change my occupation. Now, what I want to know is whether or not that is true love, and would it be right to change my occupation.
M——, La. W. F. W.

We can understand that a young woman of domestic tastes would be very unhappy if her husband were constantly traveling, therefore we cannot blame her for objecting to your occupation. On the other hand, we can understand how difficult it would be for a man in your profession to change his occupation and the conclusion is, we advise you not to marry. A woman can love truly and yet not marry when she sees her future happiness threatened. This is the best kind of love, for it is not foolhardy. It is very apparent that, like yourself, the lady is "serious."

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I am twenty-one years of age and very, very much in love with a young man of twenty. He is a very fine young man and well-to-do. I am so very, very much in love with him that it would break my heart to lose him, but I am unable to find out whether he loves me or not, although I think he does. A. Z.
Cincinnati, Ohio.

We cannot advise you in this matter except to say that if the young man really loves you, he will speak in time, and it is your duty as a modest girl to await his pleasure, provided the delay is not unreasonable. One of the quickest ways we know of forcing a young man to make known his intentions is to feign an interest in another. This will arouse his jealousy and cause him to divulge his real feelings, after which, if you wish, you can explain your actions.

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I have a whole heart full of love for some one, if they will only love me. I am only twenty years old, and am the only child of a rich mother and I have a stepfather. My mother does not seem to care for me, all she thinks of is society (which I have no use for). I can never remember the time when my mother has kissed me, and, oh, I do hunger and starve for a little love! And now she wants me to marry a man forty years old. I know he does not love me, and I almost hate him. He is wealthy and a wholesale liquor dealer, and my mother says I must marry him. I have a good or fairly good education, and could get a place in an office as stenographer with sufficient salary to furnish me the necessities of life, but I love my mother, although she is so cold to me, and I would sacrifice myself for her, if I thought she would love me. But I do not want to marry for some years, my dear Miss Shirley. Shall I marry this man for my mother or shall I seek to earn my own living.
E——, Texas. GLADYS.

Our advice to you, Gladys, is not to marry. When you truly and honestly love, it will be time enough to assume the responsibilities of matrimony. We cannot understand how any woman, and especially a mother, can advise a child to marry for money or any reason other than honest affection.

After reading so much about others' sad misfortunes, I have decided to tell to you my terrible secret and ask your advice. I am fifteen years old and have a brother twenty-two years old. He has finished college and is a handsome young man whom one could not help loving. Last week my chum spent the day with me, and wishing to have some fun, we decided to write a letter to the girl my brother is now waiting upon. She is a beautiful blonde, and Jack just worships her. Little dreaming how our plan would end, we sent the note and that evening my brother came home almost mad with agony. Evidently she had received the note and Jack had received the "bounce." Poor boy! We did everything in our power to calm him, but nothing we could do would quiet him in the least. What hurt me the worst is that my brother never gets angry. If he would scold me I would feel better, but he is so kind and patient that it is killing me. The next day I went to see her, and confessed to her, but she would not believe me. Her reason for doing the same being that Jack would not listen and declared it an untruth when she accused me before him at the time. Do please answer as soon as possible for I believe I will go crazy and it seems that I can't tell my darling brother what a wicked act I have done. JANICE R.
B——, Illinois.

You seem to have been a very foolish little girl, and the only thing for you to do is to remedy the result of your folly as soon as possible. By all means see both your brother and his fiancee with your chum and make a full and free confession of the whole matter.

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I am a young man of twenty-five and am going with a girl of eighteen and love her very much, but I am in doubt whether she loves me or not. She asks me to call on her often, which I do, but she has never given me any encouragement. We are usually left alone and the conditions are favorable, but I never can pluck up the courage to make known my love. I would hate to lose her esteem by being rude as she might call it. Will you kindly advise me? IRVING H. B.
Kansas City, Mo.

"Faint heart ne'er won fair lady." If you cannot pluck up courage to make your desires manifest, you certainly cannot expect the young lady to encourage you. No woman would consider the offer of a man's affection an act of rudeness. If you care so much for the young woman, your love ought to give you assurance enough to try your fate. It is but a weak sort of affection that is afraid to declare itself.

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I am a reader of your book, and as I was reading over the "Questions and Answers," I thought that I would like to ask you one or two questions.

Now, to begin with, I have been going with a young lady in New Hampshire, and her folks do not want me to marry her, and she wants to marry me now, but she does not want to go against her folks. I have been going with her for two years now, and I have given her two engagement rings—as I broke up with her two times and have gone with her again. Now I have broke up with her again just because she and I can not do as we want to. E. L. L.
Leominster, Mass.

The question of your marrying seems to depend solely on your ages. If you have both arrived at years of discretion, or, in other words, are over twenty, our advice is to marry and stick to each other, remembering that love is master of the human destiny. Talk to her parents as reasonably as possible and then assure them that you shall abide by the dictates of conscience. After you have married, remember that "ye twain are one flesh," and that a wife should "leave her parents and cleave to her husband." Do not act hastily, but wisely, in this important matter. If you are under age, wait a few years longer.

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I am a girl seventeen years old, and I am in a puzzle. A few weeks ago I met a young man who was very nice and gentlemanly. We were invited to a friend's house. He walked home with me and asked me if I would write to him when he went away. I said "yes," because I liked him, and I asked him if he respected me. He said he had nothing to do with a young lady whom he could not respect and, of course, he had all respect for me. I have since received two very nice letters from him and answered both of them. The last one I wrote I have received no answer to. I am very much disappointed. I wrote again asking him if I had offended him and no answer. I know he was very fond of me and have good proof as I have a very dear friend whom he told how much he respected me. I have let myself think a great deal of this young man. He is a perfect gentleman. He expects to be in town next week. Would you go to see him?
R——, Montana. PUSSIE G.

Since the young man has left two of your letters unanswered, it would appear that he had become somewhat tired of the correspondence. We think you went as far as any self-respecting girl could go when you wrote the second letter. You would be going entirely too far if you endeavored to see him when he comes to your town. Let the men seek you, Pussie—do not run after them. If the young man really wishes to continue your acquaintance he will seek an opportunity to do so. Preserve your self-respect and do not allow any man to think that you are seeking him.

---

For nearly a year the girl I used to go with has not spoken to me nor I to her, but we have just made up. She is now going with another fellow and although she used to like me I don't know now whether she does or not. Can you tell me how I can get her to like me as she used to?
Denver, Col. BERT S.

There is no royal road by which a man can win a woman's esteem. Love can never be driven, and seldom persuaded. It goes where it will—not where it is coaxed. A man can make a place for himself in a woman's regard by showing her delicate and thoughtful attentions, but, even then, he may not win her affection. If you can make yourself indispensable to the young woman, you will stand a better chance of gaining her interest than any one else.

I work in a place where there is a young man who pays me quite a lot of attention, and I have friends who chaff me about him. I would not mind my friends' chaff, if there was anything between us, but there is not, and it makes me feel very uncomfortable. Will you please tell me what to do. FLORENCE.

Providence, R. I.

Perhaps you are over-sensitive to "chaff" and, if this is so, your friends probably realize it and, therefore, only plague you the more. If you will take their talk unconcernedly, they will probably desist when they find that it has no effect upon you. If the young man's attentions are distasteful to you, of course you want to put a stop to them, and then there will be no opportunity for others to have fun at your expense.

---

I am a young girl just turned sweet sixteen, and am in awful trouble in regard to these awful boys. I manage to get all of them I want, but when I bring them home, then the trouble begins. The people in the house play all sorts of practical jokes on my beaux and me. They have them so badly frightened that they never come but once, and if they do pluck up courage to come back, they stop at the neighbors and inquire if the family is at home. I would like to have one nice, steady fellow, but I do not know how I can manage to keep him with the pranks they play on us. But they say I am too young to have beaux. So will you kindly advise me?

L——, Pa. C. S.

Your family seem to be of a humorous turn of mind, but we presume that the pranks they play are all meant good-naturedly, so the only thing for you to do is to to take them good-naturedly. You are quite young and it will be no disadvantage to you if you do not spend much time with the boys at present.

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THE FORCE OF HABIT

is strong with us. We are so accustomed to the world-wide prevalence of consumption that we accept it practically as a necessary evil. If some strange disease were to break out, and destroy human life to the same extent as does consumption, such a disease would be looked upon as an appalling plague. Quarantine would be established against it, and days of fasting and prayer appointed by the churches for the mitigation of the disease. But we accept consumption as inevitable because of its familiarity.

How true this is may be judged from a recent report of Sanitary Officer Gorgas, of Havana, Cuba. It has been cabled to the United States that yellow fever was epidemic in Havana. Dr. Gorgas answered that there is no epidemic. He says: "In the past month there were 72 deaths from consumption and 52 from yellow fever. Yellow fever therefore should not be considered epidemic more than consumption."

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